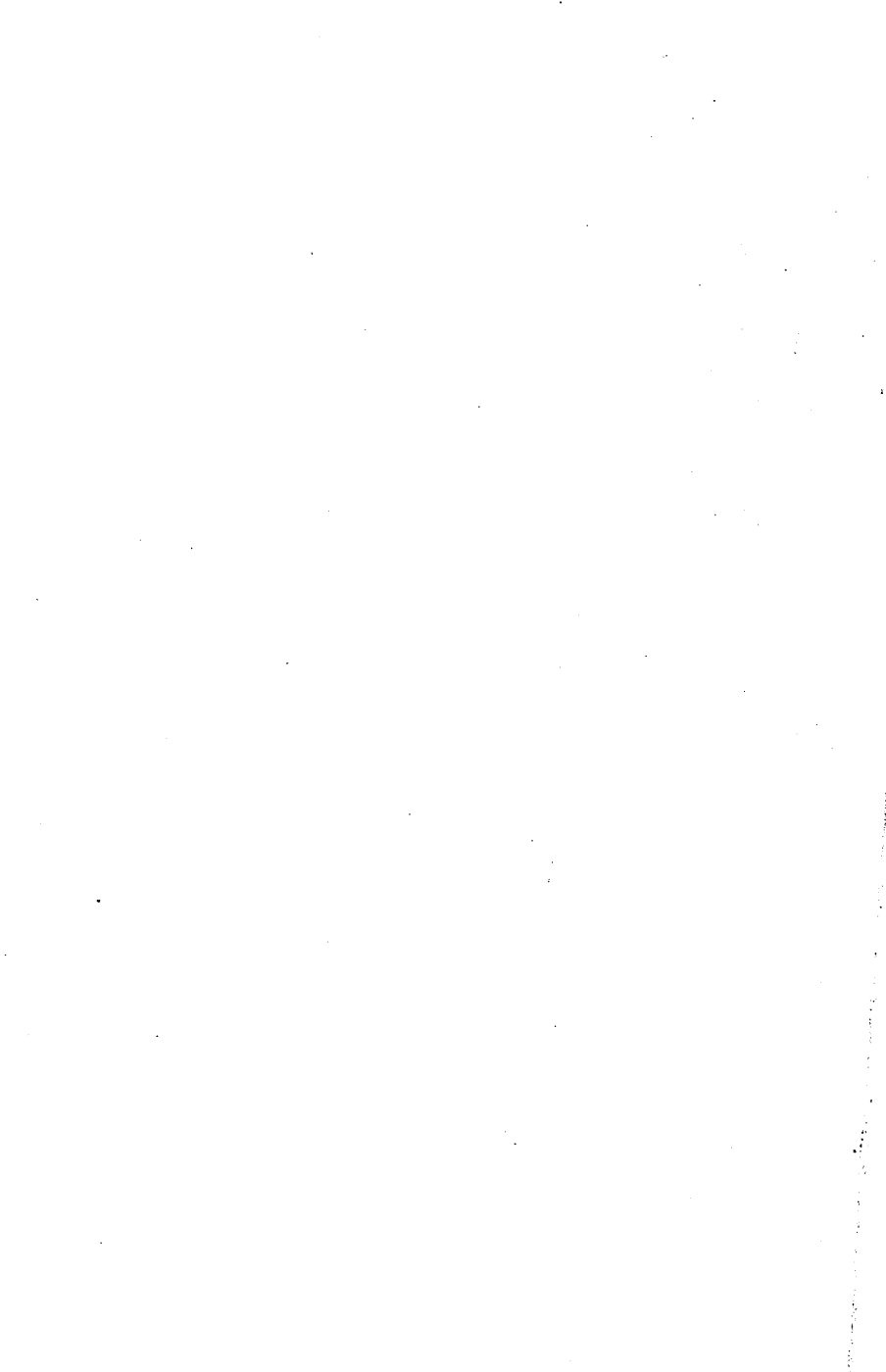


Gen. K.







# RELIGION AND INTELLECT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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## THE GRAMMAR OF PHILOSOPHY

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EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET

# RELIGION AND INTELLECT

A  
NEW CRITIQUE OF THEOLOGY

BY  
DAVID GRAHAM  
OF GRAY'S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW  
AUTHOR OF "THE GRAMMAR OF PHILOSOPHY" ETC.

EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE ST.

1919

15155  
G7  
PRINTED BY  
MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED,

FOR

T. & T. CLARK, EDINBURGH.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, AND CO. LIMITED.

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

## PREFACE.



THE whole field of Knowledge may be divided into two parts, the sacred and the secular. Science takes cognisance of the whole field of Knowledge, and naturally falls into these two great divisions, the sacred and the secular : so that Theology, as much as any other interest, is the subject-matter of science ; consequently of Reason.

But from the beginning, this sacred science of Theology has been more or less misunderstood by its professional votaries, who have treated it, to a large extent, as if Reason had nothing to do with it ; or, at least, as if Reason was quite inadequate to deal with it. As a natural result, Intelligence has been well-nigh driven out of many Churches ; superstition remains in broad possession ; hosts of men have lost the sense of sacred things—have lost that sense without which a man is not a man ; whilst amid the confusions and absurdities created and maintained by its official



supporters, Religion itself is treated by some as an object of ridicule.

It is not, I think, too much to say that Theology, with all its sacred interests and significances, has suffered more, incalculably more, from the folly of its ostensible friends than from the active hostility of its declared enemies.

In their painful ignorance and blind zeal, pietists of all denominations have called, and yet call, their most intelligent opponents, Rationalists and Freethinkers, as terms of reproach! They have been very zealous in stupidity. They have actually succeeded in pitting Reason and Religion against each other as sworn foes!

Now, everybody should know that Reason is a sacred faculty. Indeed it is the Heaven-appointed Light of Life. To be irrational is to be sinful, or stupid, or insane. There is no rational departure from this conclusion. Without Reason, or against Reason, there could be no progress, no hope in the world. But there is a Soul of hope and progress in the world. Its light is Reason. *Whatever progress has been made under the Stars has been made in the light of Reason, and not otherwise.*

This will not be denied in the field of

secular science. Scan, for example, the History of Dogma in the "Healing-Art." The reign of Dogma in Medicine was coincident with the reign of ignorance and cruelty. It makes us pale to read of the fierce things that were done under the reign of Dogmatic Medicine. Doctor San Grado is scarcely a caricature of the medicine-man of other days. The Human Race suffered dire distress under its many doctors. It had no chance in their hands except in so far as their practice came to be directed by observation and the Light of Reason.

So, in sacred, as in all other, affairs. Thought will submit to no slavery. It religiously demands absolute freedom, and lays religious claim to rule our lives. Slavery of the Mind is worse than Slavery of the Body.

The "Faith," so called, which does not stand on an intellectual and rational basis, is meaningless or worse. When a man tells me that his "Faith" is so and so, I am forthwith entitled to inquire of him—"What is the Reason of your Faith?" and unless he can give me a satisfactory, that is, a rational answer, his "Faith" is thereupon resolved into an irrational quantity.

The reign of Dogma in Religion is coincident with the reign of darkness and horror. In

Religion poor Humanity has suffered boundless woes under its dogmatic practitioners. As such they are the deadliest persons whom the world has known; but, in any case, it is only in so far as their labours have been rationally directed that they have been of any service to men. As irrational, they have been the real Hornbooks of the Universe—the very allies of Death.<sup>1</sup>

All unreason is weakness or sin. It is the great purveyor and promoter of spiritual death. There is no spiritual Light and, consequently, no spiritual Life but in Reason.

The sum of our Knowledge touching any subject whatever, either sacred or secular, is that which we may learn about it from our Intellect and Senses rationally directed: not less, not more.

It is quite clear that there can be no instruction in anything which does not appeal and recommend itself to the Intelligence. Whatever in Religion is not of Intelligence is blind mummery. The only true orthodoxy conceivable is the orthodoxy of pure Intelligence. Any other kind of orthodoxy is baneful heterodoxy or kakodoxy. Sane Christianity is an intelligent appeal to the individual Intelligence to lead a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> See Burns, *Death and Doctor Hornbook*.

Life on the great model exhibited by the Founder, or it is of no account or worse than of no account. This is the length and breadth, the height and depth, of sane Christianity. No spiritual Salvation seems to be attainable by any man but through intelligence and good conduct. Full Spiritual Enfranchisement is only achievable through the full play of Intellect.

Discerning and wise men have always apprehended this truth to some extent, but I am not aware that they have ever made any well-combined and well-sustained effort to overthrow the devastating tyranny of irrational dogmatism.

The world requires to be taught and trained in Rational Theology. It has no want of equal exigence and importance. It is continually suffering in its deepest and highest interests from irrational indoctrination on the one hand, and from lack of sound, rational teaching on the other. Thus it lies under a double curse—positive and negative. It is cursed positively by the irrational and quack medicaments so widely prescribed ; it is cursed negatively by an almost universal withholding of the rational Elixirs.

The object of this book (under favour of God) is to stimulate and promote that great moral enterprise, the uncompromising subor-

dination of Religion to Reason; to separate the true, the intrinsic and holy in Christian Theology, from the false, extrinsic and profane; to teach this healthful and sublime Science to as many as will listen, and persuade them to yoke it to everyday life; to induce as many men as possible, of all nations and tribes and tongues and callings, to enter into, and worship God within, the spacious, serene and all-sacred Temple of Spiritual Intelligence. This is the prime object of the book—one of boundless importance. Such an enterprise widely taken up, would mark the beginning of a New Reformation: which would be the logical sequel to, the glorious expansion or development of, the Renaissance and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.

In this enterprise we are, in the first place, entitled to the sympathy and assistance of all who call themselves Protestants. In times gone by they have nobly vindicated the honesty and reliability not only of the corporeal senses, but of the moral intuitions, against the more gross and palpable falsehoods of ecclesiastical dogmatism. It is now their duty—a duty no less logical, urgent and noble, to vindicate to its innermost fibres the potential and natural rectitude of the Human Mind; and to enfranchise all Thought

from the shameful tyranny of Unreason however subtle it may be in pietistic pretension ; however strongly entrenched behind tradition ; or however hoary with the rime of antiquity. The logical and legitimate outcome of Protestantism is strict Rationalism. Its natural and sacred mission is to establish the most absolute freedom of Thought. It cannot stop short of this grand achievement without stultifying and disgracing itself. He is no Protestant who fears Thought.

No less should this enterprise recommend itself to all who are intelligently seeking for unity in the Churches. You can only be intellectually right in one way, namely by Reason, in which it is impossible that there can be two opposing rights ; whereas in Unreason, whilst you are *ipso facto* wrong, your wrongness, unless you are slavishly submitting to a dogmatic tyranny, as in Romanism or in Plymouthism, may assume any one of a thousand ugly forms. The Irrational as free, is necessarily sectarian ; the Rational alone, is necessarily One and Catholic ; consequently there is no cure for sectarianism but under the golden sunshine and in the breezy atmosphere of Reason. Universal Truth or Catholicity can only be found in the Universal Reason. There can never be a Catholic

Church but under the Government of the Universal Reason. A Church possesses catholicity in so far only as it complies with the requisitions of the Universal Reason. The real Catholic Church must found itself on principles as rational, as obvious, as incontestible, as universal as are contained in Cocker's Arithmetic. Any other kind of Church is necessarily and obviously partial, sectarian and schismatic. The Multiplication Table in its universal compliance with the numerical convictions of the Human Race, and in its universal acceptance by that divisive Race, is a true exemplification, within the secular sphere, of what constitutes Catholic doctrine.

Our enterprise should also engage the deepest sympathy of the man of Science, the first word of whose creed is Knowledge; of the Philosopher, who knows that the highest life is life in harmony with the highest Knowledge; of the Statesman, who should see that a nation's true greatness cannot otherwise be established than upon a multitude of excellent citizens; of the Philanthropist, who should observe that the dirt, want, rags, disease, misery and degradation of the Human Race as a whole, can only be effectively removed by raising the intelligence and the

character, by arousing the self-respect and inspiring the individual member of the Human Race with noble spiritual ambitions. Finally, it should commend itself to all who have the Cause of God at heart. Thinking must be the initial process in all Illumination and Reformation. "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Heaven itself begins with Knowledge, and can have no other brave beginning. Knowledge can only rise and grow towards maturity under the benign husbandry of unfettered Thought.

"The better we Protestants advance in our noble development," says Goethe truly, "so much more rapidly will the Catholics" (and he might have added all other kinds of religionists) "follow us. As soon as they feel themselves caught up by the ever-extending enlightenment of the time, they must go on, do what they will, till at last the point is reached where all is but one. The mischievous sectarianism of the Protestants will also cease, and with it the hatred and hostile feeling between father and son, sister and brother; for as soon as the pure doctrine and love of Christ are comprehended in their true nature, and have become a vital principle, we shall feel ourselves as human beings, great and free, and not attach especial importance



to a degree more or less in the outward forms of Religion. Besides, we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of word and faith to a Christianity of feeling and action.”<sup>1</sup>

The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century represents the partial conquest of a province, —a very hideous province, but no more than a province of the Kingdom of Darkness. The needful Reformation will not be completed until all the Churches of the world have acknowledged the supremacy of Reason, and are everywhere found striving earnestly to square their doctrines and their practice with its sacred dictates. Perfect Religion consists of perfect life-practice arising out of, and governed by, a perfect doctrinal consistency. All the Intelligence in the Universe must presumably be in favour of such a Reformation.

President Wilson truly says: “There is a great deal of moral force moving through the world, and every man who opposes himself to that wind will go down in disgrace.”<sup>2</sup>

The present work may be regarded as a theological development of my *Grammar of Philosophy*.

<sup>1</sup> *Conversations with Eckermann*, pp. 568–9.

<sup>2</sup> At the Sorbonne, 21st Dec. 1918.

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# RELIGION AND INTELLECT

*"There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding."*—JOB xxxii. 8.



## CHAPTER I

### THE STANDARD OF KNOWLEDGE

*THE Rational Consciousness is the only possible Standard of Human Knowledge.*—It is now about nineteen centuries since the Founder of Christianity did his world-work. His life on earth has given rise to great spiritual results—to great moral awakening. Splendid heroism has been accomplished through his inspiring example, and many Churches have been founded in his name; but, notwithstanding these facts, the people who call themselves Christians are still at large variance with each other even as to the very meaning of Christianity. This is a great evil. It could not be otherwise than profitable if we could dispel some of the perplexities by which this religion has been surrounded, and help to



determine the real elements of which it is constituted.

Before dealing with any of the specific problems which it offers to our consideration, let me request careful attention to certain psychological axioms and theorems which must be accepted by all responsible persons as the basis of any rational discussion, and which, indeed, are implied in any rational discussion of life and doctrine.

In conformity with the doctrine set forth and discussed in my *Grammar of Philosophy*, our first axiom is that the Rational Consciousness is the only possible standard of human knowledge. Without this and kindred axioms, we should have no principles, either sacred or secular, from which to draw deductions, and no facts upon which to make inductions. None but the inconsiderate can expect to start a valid argument without such *a priori* premises: yet this is exactly what all the illusionist philosophers and school theologians are trying to do, and have been trying to do since the world began. Surely it is time to put a stop to this kind of fatuity if possible.

*Some ancient views of the subject.*—Let us briefly resume the study of this great subject. Before directing attention to the voice of the individual consciousness, listen to what some

able men have said about it—incidentally and otherwise. The Mosaic Legislator wrote: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil";<sup>1</sup> in other words, Thou must follow thine own inner sense or consciousness of the right, without any reference whatever to the example of the multitude. The conduct of the multitude, as a multitude, must have no authority with us against our own moral sense of things. Solomon is reported to have written: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> When Socrates discussed anything, "he proceeded upon propositions of which the truth was generally acknowledged, thinking that a sure foundation was thus formed for his reasonings. Accordingly, whenever he spoke," says Xenophon, "he, of all men that I have known, most readily prevailed upon his hearers to assent to his arguments; and he used to say that Homer had attributed to Ulysses the character of a sure orator as being able to form his reasoning on points acknowledged by all mankind."<sup>3</sup> Plato declares, "There is no law or order superior to science; nor is it lawful for intellect to be the slave of anything, but the ruler of all."<sup>4</sup> Again, "Education is not of that

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xx. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Memorabilia*, bk. iv. c. 6. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *The Laws*, bk. ix, c. 13.

character which some persons announce it to be when they somehow assert that there is no science in the soul, but that they can implant it just as if they implanted sight in the eyes of the blind";<sup>1</sup> and again, "The Deity has established within us the very thing first, so as to be competent to understand what is shown us."<sup>2</sup> He represents Socrates as saying, "No greater evil can happen to any one than to hate reasoning. But hatred of reasoning and hatred of mankind both spring from the same source. . . . Pay little attention to Socrates, but much more to the truth; and if I appear to you to say anything true, assent to it; but if not, oppose me with all your might."<sup>3</sup>

*Some modern views of it.*—So with the best of the moderns. Thus Bacon: *Homo, naturae minister et interpres, tantum facit et intelligit quantum de naturae ordine re vel menti observaverit: nec amplius scit aut potest.*<sup>4</sup> Again: "The nature of man doth extremely covet to have somewhat in his understanding fixed and immovable, and as a rest and support to his mind."<sup>5</sup> Regis observed that our knowledge of our own existence was not

<sup>1</sup> *The Republic*, bk. vii. c. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Epinomis*, c. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedo*, 87, 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Novum Organum*, i.

<sup>5</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, bk. ii.; *Works*, vol. i. p. 139.

derived from reasoning (that was, not from the Elaborative Faculty) *mais par une connaissance simple et interieure qui precede tous les connaissances acquisés et qui j'appelle conscience*.<sup>1</sup> Pascal saw the same truth: "Let us labour to think aright; this is the foundation of morality." Hobbes wrote: "A certain rule of our own actions is wanted, for it is to no purpose to be bidden in everything to do right before there be a certain rule and measure of right established."<sup>2</sup> Locke is no less explicit. "The mind," he writes, "is at no pains of proving and examining (original principles), but perceives the truth as the eye doth light only by being directed towards it. . . . This part of knowledge is irresistible, and, like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived as soon as ever the mind turns itself that way, and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt or examination, but the mind is presently filled with the clear light of it. 'Tis on this intuition that depends all the evidence and certainty of all our knowledge; which certainty every one finds to be so great, that he cannot imagine, and therefore

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. iv., note, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *English Works*, vol. i. p. 9.

cannot require a greater. He that demands a greater certainty than this, demands he knows not what, and shows only that he has a mind to be a sceptic without being able to be so.”<sup>1</sup> Bishop Butler clearly saw the same truth. “It is ridiculous to attempt,” he said, “to prove the truth of those perceptions whose truth we can no otherwise prove than by other perceptions of exactly the same kind with them, and which there is just the same kind of ground to suspect ; or to attempt to prove the truth of our faculties which can no otherwise be proved than by the use or means of those very suspected faculties themselves.”<sup>2</sup> Brown admits that it is on observation or consciousness that the whole of science is founded.<sup>3</sup> With no uncertain voice Sir William Hamilton declared : “ Every demonstration is deduced from something given and indemonstrable ; all that is comprehensible hangs from some revealed (*i.e.* ultimate and incomprehensible) fact which we must believe as actual. In consciousness, in the original spontaneity of intelligence (*nous, locus principiorum*) are revealed the primordial facts of our intelligent

<sup>1</sup> *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. iv. c. ii. s. 1.  
See also Appendix, “Some Serious Documents.”

<sup>2</sup> *Of Personal Identity : Dissert.* i. p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. i. p. 82.

nature. Consciousness is the fountainhead of all comprehensibility and illustration, but as such, cannot itself be illustrated or comprehended. To ask how any fact of consciousness is possible, is to ask how a being intelligent as man is possible. . . . But as we did not create ourselves, and are not even in the secret of our own creation, we must take our existence, our knowledge, upon trust: and that philosophy is the only true because in it alone can truth be realised which does not revolt against the authority of our natural beliefs. 'The voice of Reason is the voice of God.'"<sup>1</sup> Carlyle also saw the necessity of such a principle—that "the first step in primary or critical philosophy must be to find some indubitable principle, to fix ourselves on some unchangeable basis, to discover what the Germans call *Urwahr*, the primitive truth, the necessarily, absolutely and eternally true."<sup>2</sup> That unchangeable basis can only be found in the Human Consciousness.

*The Authority of the Individual.*—So far, external authorities; but, as advised in the *Grammar of Philosophy*, let each individual test the matter for himself. He will personally find in doing so that it is as impossible to

<sup>1</sup> *Discussions*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. i. p. 79 (1899).

build up a valid edifice of knowledge without a basis in consciousness as it would be to build a stone house without terrestrial foundations. Further, it is on the basis of consciousness *alone* that science must necessarily rest. Nor can we go below this foundation. A lever cannot operate to raise the rock upon which its own fulcrum rests; the Human Mind is powerless to undermine its own platform of consciousness. No species of crowbar can enable the investigator to get in below consciousness or in behind it. They who attempt this enterprise are as one trying to lift the plank on which he is standing, or striving to establish himself below his own feet. Such an enterprise would not show strength by any means, but feebleness; not insight, but no sight. Yet this is the wild task upon which so many of the Futilitarians are engaged.<sup>1</sup>

*To deny the authority of consciousness is to commit intellectual suicide.*—To deny the

<sup>1</sup> For speaking of those as "futilitarian" who scoff at and oppose Common Sense, some of my critics have assailed me with great acerbity—a manifestation of prejudice and bad temper, however, which I fully anticipated. Their knowledge will be increased and their bad temper dispelled whenever they permit themselves to enter into an unprejudiced and intelligent study of the subject. Even the man who tries to reason against the validity of Reason should, *himself* see that he is an absurd and futilitarian person.

authority of consciousness is to commit intellectual suicide. We can give no further reason, for instance, why two and two make four than the fact that the individual intelligence dogmatizes that they must make four in any conceivable circumstances. True it is that some persons with an abnormal talent for doubting, try to speculate that two and two might make five; but we have not yet heard of any one suggesting that a Cash-Book might be kept on the two-and-two-make-five principle. Indeed such a person would be quite intolerable in the counting-house, and he is equally unwelcome in the philosophic sanctum.

*Nature abounds in dogmas which are invincible.*—We can give no higher authority for holding that stealing is sinful, than the universal intuition, or moral discernment, that it is so. The same with lying, or envying, or murdering, or any other breach of Moral Law. Shall a liar become venerable by much lying? Shall an envious person become beautiful by cultivating the green eye? Shall the murderer become amiable by a succession of murders? Can it be at all doubtful that honesty is honourable? Nature is rich in dogmas invincible. The sceptic is intellectually drunken. He staggers in daylight and tumbles over visible things.



*The general obligation of contracts had never to be enacted by any Legislature.*—The general obligation of contracts had never to be expressly announced by any Legislature: it has always been naturally presumed.<sup>1</sup> All nations seem to have recognised a *jus naturae* arising out of Human Consciousness—a *jus naturae* carrying its own sanction and manifesting its own validity.

*The difference between legal and moral obligation.*—Notice the difference between legal and moral obligation. For instance, the legal formula, *Do tibi ut des; do ut facias; facio ut des; facio ut facias*, involves a rule of conduct altogether inferior in dignity to that of moral obligation. You are not under legal obligation to save a man, say, from drowning, but you are under a moral obligation to save him even at the risk of your own life. But indeed every intelligent man knows that the moral question raises issues quite superior to those of any other question. Speaking at University College, Liverpool, on one occasion, Mr. Justice Fry said truly that “as Duty spoke to the individual man through conscience, so she spoke to men as social beings through the law. What conscience was in the in-

<sup>1</sup> Broom, *Commentary on the Common Law*, p. 262 (7th ed.).

dividual soul, the law was in the body politic, with the qualification that to the full height and dignity of conscience, the law could never attain. Conscience had been speaking through the law ever since society began.”<sup>1</sup> But, of course, legal obligation covers only a small part of human duty.

*Society at large recognises the Sovereignty of Consciousness.*—Society at large, wittingly or unwittingly, explicitly or implicitly, acknowledges the Sovereignty of Consciousness. There is no possible escape from it. It is only as you claim to have a rational consciousness that I have anything to say to you; it is only as I claim to have a rational consciousness that you can reasonably speak to me. In all our intercourse we explicitly or implicitly assume that the standard of veracity is to be found in consciousness. The more emphatically or vociferously you deny the validity of consciousness, the more emphatically or vociferously you assert its validity; your denial in this case being the very strongest form of assertion, inasmuch as your denial is unwittingly founded and ignorantly built upon the very basis whose validity you are seeking to deny. Emphasis in your denial only adds emphasis to your

<sup>1</sup> *The Standard*, Nov. 29, 1892.

folly. Not Antaeus nor Hercules himself can lift the plank on which himself is standing. The more strenuous his efforts in such an enterprise, the more firmly would he pin himself to the plank.

*The first duty of a wise builder.*—The first thing that a wise builder does is to look to his foundations. "When men build upon false ground, the more they build the greater the ruin." To make a modest confession of ignorance touching any subject is much nobler than to offer us a theory concerning it founded on crazy assumptions. Let every philosopher keep an attentive eye upon his foundations. "The Eternal Right that rests on oldest laws,"—"The unwritten Laws of God that know not change," are, for us, only to be found within our own consciousness. Herein only is to be found the unchangeable basis, the primitive truth, the indubitable principle which Carlyle sought. Through failure to observe the need for, and to make choice of, this basis, the history of philosophy has hitherto been to a very large extent a depressing history of speculative delirium, of tragical merry-andrewism drawing forth the sorrow or laughter, the indignation or contempt, of the World's wise men. The very first lesson that the philosopher needs to learn is that he be

strictly honest with himself, that he strictly interpret his own genuine sense of things, and build upon that foundation.

*Disasters resulting from the neglect of this duty.*—If such a clever man as Descartes had been good enough to rest satisfied with common sense and to build upon the facts of consciousness, he would never have set up his ridiculous theory of vortices ;<sup>1</sup> if Malebranche had been contented to apply to this same guide and to listen to it, he could never have set up his vain theory of “seeing all things in God” ; if Leibnitz had been as wise as he was clever, and had addressed himself to facts instead of fancies, he would never have mentioned “pre-established harmony” ; if Spinoza could have placed himself under the rule and governance of his everyday faculties, he and his followers would have been saved from the involved stupidities of Pantheism ; if the amiable Berkeley could only have remained loyal to his plain senses, he would never have resolved the solid Universe into boneless idealism ; if the acute Hume had been acute enough to retain full possession of his senses,

<sup>1</sup> Like the theory of Mr. Simpkinson of Bath “demonstrating that the Globe is a great Custard, whipped into coagulation by whirlwinds and cooked by electricity” (*The Ingoldsby Legends*).

he could never have sought for conclusions in the Sceptic's Cimmerian pit. "The dark caves and shadows of Plato, the films of Epicurus and the ideas and impressions of modern philosophers, are the production of human fancy, successively *invented*" (not found in Nature) "to satisfy the eager desire of knowing how we perceive external objects; but they are all deficient in the two essential characters of a true and philosophic account of the phenomenon; for we neither have any evidence of their existence, nor, if they did exist, can it be shown how they would produce perception."<sup>1</sup> I request the very earnest attention of all serious students to this passage. It should save them from many fruitless and futile labours, and the world from libraries of foolish books. Notice, for example, that a disruption or catalysis of any being or thing into "noumenon" and "phenomenon"—as in Kantism, is not only impossible in fact, but unthinkable in theory. Take a gooseberry, say, and just try to effect a disruption either in fact or thought (*i.e.* objectively or subjectively) between what you might be pleased to call the "noumena" and the "phenomena" of the gooseberry! Do so, and if you are a normally

<sup>1</sup> Reid, {*Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, p. 326 (Hamilton's ed.).

endowed person, you will immediately find that you have been engaged in a First-of-April enterprise.

*The position of materialists and atheists in respect of the Standard of Knowledge.*—So, too, with materialists and atheists in respect of the Standard of Knowledge; if they would resolutely resolve to walk in the firm paths of the Common Sense, they would find it utterly impossible to theorise responsibility out of existence, and would forthwith agree with Locke and good men in general, that there is “nothing so beautiful to the eye as truth; nothing so deformed and irreconcilable to the understanding as a lie.”<sup>1</sup> I think we may take it upon ourselves to say for the materialists that, in their own consciousness they know that lying involves actual turpitude in the liar; that, do what they may, they cannot get behind, or altogether break up, their own actual convictions concerning the character of ethical truth and falsehood; or the conviction that they are possessed of moral freedom and responsibility. In their own consciousness, I apprehend, they will find themselves constrained to agree with the wise man that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness—a fact which is

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, bk. iv. c. iii. s. 20.

necessarily inexplicable under any version of materialism.

*All men are living below their knowledge and their powers.*—Nor need those philosophers who have declared war against the validity of the rational consciousness call in Hottentots, or any other “savages,” as their allies. The Hottentots, too, appear to be possessed not only of consciousness at large, but of *conscience* as well; have some moral convictions; know there are some things which they ought to do, and some things which they ought not to do. In many cases the conviction may not be strong, but abundant testimony seems to point to the conclusion that it is there. Perhaps the main difference to be found at present between the average European and the average Hottentot is that the former wears more clothing. Look at Britons “enjoying” themselves at a country fair, or in one of our city slums on a Saturday night; or at a Frenchman worshipping an old bone; or at an Anglican clergyman reciting the Athanasian Creed with a grave countenance, or baptizing infants as if their immortal souls depended upon it, and we shall begin to entertain doubts as to whether the average European is, after all, very much superior to the Hottentot. In any case I

think we may take it that all men are actually living below their knowledge and their powers ; that their knowledge is more or less superior to their actual lives.

*The proper meaning of Common Sense.*—

If you ask me what I definitely mean by the phrases “rational consciousness” and “Common Sense,” I reply—the general intelligence which I assume that you possess when I seriously address you ; or the general intelligence which you assume me to possess when you seriously address me. Whenever one man opens his mouth to speak to another, he implicitly relies upon the existence of a Common Sense, or a common understanding betwixt them. No man can proceed to work without an implicit belief in the validity of his faculties. Psychology is nothing more (and cannot be anything more) than an analysis and classification of our faculties and of the convictions conveyed to us by our faculties. This is the Common Sense of the matter. Thus it is that the psychological sceptic cannot possibly make a sceptical remark without, *ipso facto*, stultifying himself. Every man who denies the authority of this Common Sense should refrain from controversy. This is demanded of him not only by logic, but by decency. Without the



existence of this Common Sense the very traffic in our streets would be immediately paralysed, and no company of recruits, however enterprising, would ever be able to "form fours."

Therefore it appears that the Rational Consciousness or Common Sense is necessarily the only possible Standard of Knowledge. No psychological theory under which you cannot be loyal to your whole nature, can be sound. The schools and academies continue in a state of intellectual confusion through neglect of the Rational Consciousness—apart from which there can be no science, no philosophy. In addressing himself to any subject, every philosopher should be continually asking himself—What are the facts of the case? What does my everyday Common Sense tell me about it? Only as men do this can we look for light and progress in any department of Life.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

*THE Rational Consciousness is the ultimate authority in Religion.*—And as set forth at some length in my *Grammar of Philosophy*, let it be repeated and emphasised here that whilst Consciousness is the ultimate authority in all secular science, whether of mind or matter, it is no less the ultimate authority in theological science, in spiritual and divine lore.

*Some external authorities.*—It is written in the Book of Job—"Gird up now thy loins like a man, and answer thou Me" (xxxviii. 3). How could anybody comply with this challenge rationally, but upon the basis of Common Sense?

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," says the woman of Samaria, "and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Christ replies: "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." That was—We must worship God on the basis of conscious conviction. By its sacred constitution Reason is sacredly sworn to disregard all kinds of irrational doctrine.

"When maistrie cometh, the God of love anon  
Betith his wings ; and, farewell, he is gon."

Reason, too, may take her departure, but will not submit to any mastery.

"Trusting in the Almighty's aid," says the Seraph Abdiel, I mean to try the puissance of Lucifer

"whose reason I have tried  
Unsound and false ; nor is it ought but just  
That he who in debate of truth hath won,  
Should win in arms, in both disputes alike  
Victor ; though brutish that contest and foul,  
When reason hath to deal with force ; yet so  
Most reason is that reason overcome."<sup>1</sup>

There can be no victory worth obtaining against Reason. By its very nature Reason cannot be satisfied until it has triumphed all along the line. In every question Mind must struggle to prevail, and must refuse to consider anything as right wherein it doth not prevail. We must in no case take our brains to Uncle Peter's Establishment, nor

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*, bk. vi.

consent to deposit them in any similar receiving office, however pretentious it may be.

Sir William Hamilton has excellently said : "As the philosophy of mind scientifically establishes the proof of human liberty, philosophy in this as in many other relations, is the true preparation and best aid of an enlightened Christian theology. Religion, theology, is not independent of the same philosophy, for as God only exists for us as we have faculties capable of apprehending His existence, and of fulfilling His behests ; nay, as the phenomena from which we are warranted to infer His Being are wholly mental, the examination of these faculties and of these phenomena is, consequently, the primary condition of every sound theology."<sup>1</sup> In short, Theology, like all other sciences, is impossible but on the basis of the Rational Consciousness.

*Honest Thought alone can deal with human problems.*—Honest Thought alone can deal with human problems. Honest thought is the only possible solvent of error and absurdity. Even ill-judged charity is a curse. "The education at colleges of fools ; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand ; alms to sots and the

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures*, vol. i. pp. 42, 63.

thousand-fold relief societies ;—although I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.”<sup>1</sup> No good can be done but on the basis of sound thinking. “Do not,” says Lord Kelvin, “be afraid of free thinkers. If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by Science to the belief in God, which is the foundation of all Religion. You will find that science is not antagonistic but helpful to Religion.”<sup>2</sup>

*The native merits of the case.*—The whole theological Faculty of the Planet Terra are invited to give the keenest attention to this, the actual state of the case, namely, that like all other sciences, a sound Theology must have its foundation and warranty in the facts of consciousness ; that no theological dogma is worth one brass farthing if it does not appeal to, and find itself in harmony with, Common Sense, intuition, facts of consciousness. All foolish philosophies and false sciences have had their rise through the neglect, or setting aside, of data impregnably established in consciousness. All sacerdotalisms and futilitarian theologies have had their

<sup>1</sup> Emerson, *Essays*, First Series, pp. 53-4 (Riverside ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, June 1903, p. 1069.

disastrous rise from the same source. First of all it becomes us to seek the priceless blessing of a clear and self-possessed intellect. The Church and the World have been ceaselessly cursed by muddled thinkers as well as by ambitious and fanatical dogmatists.

Varro is reported to have declared that within his knowledge, the Heathen philosophers had embraced two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions regarding the nature of the Supreme Good. If they had carefully studied the facts of Consciousness they could scarcely have indulged in more than one, for, as Persius observed—"Thou canst not cheat the censor in thy breast." No, that particular Censor may be distracted on occasion, but it cannot be frightened or browbeaten any more than Omnipotence. On the whole you cannot admire villainy; but despite your own evil propensities, you are bound to admire—actually to admire, truth and heroism and all kinds of virtue. Unsophisticated man ever appears to have had such a natural, easy appreciation of Virtue (though himself not virtuous), that if those two hundred and eighty-eight philosophers had only given an attentive ear to their inner voices instead of spending their energies in outer and fantastic speculations upon the

Supreme Good, it seems probable that, substantially at least, they would have come to one general conclusion respecting it. They would have concluded at all events (I should suppose) that truth, heroism and all kinds of virtue form an important and necessary part of the Supreme Good ; and that falsehood, cowardice and all kinds of sin are quite hostile to the conception of it.

So with Theology, proper. The cartloads and shiploads of Theology which have been compiled—that bewildering mass of superstition and speculation which, down through the Ages, has lain as a horrible incubus upon the Human Race, had never existed if theologians had earnestly tried to square their doctrine with the clear teaching of the God-created Common Sense.

*If we are to believe in Religion it must be because of its reasons, evidences, proofs.*—On what ground can anybody be asked to give assent *surpassing the evidence*, to any theological proposition? Every wise man must scorn such a proposal. If we are to believe in Religion, it must be because of its evidences, reasons, proofs. No other basis can be of any good account ; no other sound basis is conceivable. By the constitution of the Human Mind, a man must, in some way or

other, refer all questions in which he is interested, to his own understanding, or remain ignorant of the rational answers which they require. It is the only authority to which he can reasonably appeal; and by the Christian Theologian especially, it ought to be looked upon as a Divinely constituted authority.

If the theologian has anything to report, how is he to get into intelligent communication with poor Smith and Brown if not upon the basis of an understanding common to them all?

Every system of Theology must be utterly in vain, or worse than vain, if it be founded on a falsification, or on a disregard, of the testimony of our natural faculties.

We all know that in our own day as well as in that of the Apostle Paul, "there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers going about, specially they of the circumcision." How are we to deal with such persons successfully but on the sound basis of the understanding? The noble Apostle himself did not sufficiently realise the rational exigencies of such a situation.

*The Theologians have failed to observe the sacred constitution of the Human Mind.*—That the Human Mind is naturally sacred is seen in the microscopic keenness with which



a right man examines his own conduct. "I repent of my sins and (sometimes) sin in my repentance ; I pray for forgiveness and (sometimes) sin in my prayers ; I resolve against future sin, and (sometimes) sin in forming my resolutions."<sup>1</sup> The Human Mind easily recognises such facts—so sacredly is it constituted. It is the most sacred of all known creations—much more sacred than any church or altar, or plate or pot conceivable.

But here is a strange thing : all kinds of church people fail to observe adequately the sacred constitution of the Human Mind ; nay, some of them even seem to regard it as rather a profane entity ! This is one of the root errors of all kinds of theologians, and, until it be eradicated, the spiritual health of mankind cannot be good. On the other hand, they commit the exquisite absurdity of regarding mere church officials and rites and ceremonies and paraphernalia as of Divine institution ! They will scoff at a Human Soul, and pay a grovelling veneration to a wooden image ! They will look at what is secular, inert and common, worshipfully ; whilst what is in truth intrinsically sacred, they will besottedly regard as profane !

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Beveridge, quoted by Dwight, *Theology*, vol. ii. p. 22.

*Even Divine Testimony concerning anything can only reach us through our own senses.*—Again, they fail to observe that even Divine Testimony concerning anything, cannot reach the individual otherwise than through his own senses, or through the properly attested evidence of what has been seen or heard by the individual senses of others: so that no “church authority,” nor “Divine Warranty,” so called, can ever be other than a human warranty. *All evidence concerning God, as of every other object of thought, is, and must necessarily be, human evidence.* There is no possible escape from this position. If God Himself condescend to speak to us, it can only be through our individual and, I hold, sacred senses. Yet, if the orthodox are to be credited, we are to believe nothing *sans le congé de messieurs les experts!*<sup>1</sup>

*The potential importance of Smith and Brown.*—From the ravings of the futilitarian theorists of all schools, one might suppose that God had nothing to do with Smith and Brown—nothing to say to these good fellows at all! For my part I believe that they are as divinely constituted as bishops, priests and deacons, and think that every argument for Religion, as for everything else in which they

<sup>1</sup> See *La Critique de l'école des Femmes*, Sc. vii.

may be interested, should positively be addressed to their intelligence. As Whitman says :

“Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so ;  
Only what nobody denies, is so.”<sup>1</sup>

In the region of Mind all external domination is unnatural, tyrannical and futile. Everything good must take place therein by persuasion, by conviction ; nothing by compulsion. “He that hath an ear, let *him* hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Ezra and his friends “read in the Book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused (the people) *to understand* the reading.”<sup>2</sup>

*The attempt to disregard the Human Mind is a crowning act of folly.*—There is nothing more tragico-ludicrous in the history of man than the sacerdotal and theological attempt, running through all the Ages, to cast a slur upon the authority of the Human Mind. No greater insult, surely, can be directed against the Divine Being Who made the understanding, than the continual attempt made by priests and theologians to cast discredit upon it. It is the scurviest freak that a man can play with himself to withstand his own conscious knowledge and convictions. It is a crowning act of folly. Every person should

<sup>1</sup> *Leaves of Grass*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Neh. viii. 8.

have the most sacred regard for the actual deliverances of his own mind. Notice religiously that it is only as a rational being that you have a claim to speak about anything. The moment you surrender your Reason—the moment you impugn the authority of Reason, you cease that very moment to be a fit companion for a sane man: you ought to be seized by the doctors.

*We must reject sacerdotal intervention.*—Nor should you put yourself in sacerdotal leading-strings. God Himself is doubtlessly infallible; but all men in the world, priests included, are most probably fallible: consequently none of them can properly be admitted to stand between God and us. We get nearest to God in our own Souls. He is nearer to us than any Prophets even, or Apostles, can be. Go out and look at the Stars, and bethink yourselves if it is reasonable to suppose that the Almighty can possibly have any need of officials, priests, to stand and negotiate between Him and any member of His Family!

*All religious ministrations should be addressed to the individual intelligence.*—All religious ministrations should be offered in terms suitable to the understanding and appreciation of the individual. It is inconceivable that the All-Wise God should hold us

guilty of any offence except in so far as we have offended against the Laws of Intelligence. There can be no excusable departure from this position. It is only in ignorance or in impiety that we can depart from it.

In all inquiries after truth, each individual should stand towards all other individuals in the relationship of a jury to witnesses.

Carefully consider the matter. If in your speech you do not mean to address yourself to the human understanding, what do you propose to address? Give us a clear answer. Meet the point at the point. Religiously avoid shuffling. For the love of God, let us try to impress upon each other that God made the Understanding.

Every sane man rightly reserves to himself the right of testing the quality of the metallic coin or the chartered paper which may be presented to him for the payment of material things. *A fortiori* he has the same right—nay, in this case it is his high and bounden duty, to test the intellectual or spiritual coin which is offered to him. We do not require the authority of a pope or of a Council or of a Church for any great religious truth whatsoever; no more than we require such authority as to whether the Sun is shining or not.

*Noble teachers one of our great needs.—*

Perhaps one of the first of the world's needs is that of noble teachers—true educators—not dogmatists: the function of the true educator being, let it be noted, not to see for us, but simply to help us to see; not to hear for us, but simply to help and induce us to hear.

*The helpless position of the dogmatically taught.*—It should also be borne in mind that men when they have only been dogmatically taught, find on coming abroad into the world that they cannot even “maintain the principles so taken up and rested on”; and that thereupon they frequently proceed to “cast off all principles and turn perfect sceptics regardless of knowledge and virtue.”<sup>1</sup> There is no remedy against such an evil but the great remedy of private judgment. “We should not judge of things by men's opinions, but of opinions by things. . . . Truth, whether in or out of fashion, is the measure of knowledge and the business of the understanding; whatsoever is beside that, however authorised by consent or recommended by rarity, is nothing but ignorance or something worse.”<sup>2</sup>

What enormous and healthy gaps should we

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, s. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* s. 23. See also his Preface to *A Paraphrase and Notes to the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*; *Works*, vol. iii. p. 112. But his own exegetical attempts on orthodox lines are extremely poor. See vol. iii. pp. 311-2.

find in our libraries of philosophy and theology if all the books contained in them which have been written in defiance of this simple and religious rule, could be suddenly whisked out of existence! The magician who should effect this stroke with his "Hey, Presto!" would be deserving of a golden statue to his honour in every college quadrangle.

*The right policy with insoluble problems.*—If you start with the assumption that Reason cannot deal with a given problem, that a given problem is above Reason, which is frequently the case, the only honest course to adopt is either to speak negatively about it, or to be silent concerning it altogether: for I take it that no man will be foolish enough to claim a right to speak irrationally on any subject—*i.e.* to speak outside the Divine Laws of Intelligence and Logic. Yet, absurd though it be, this is the common practice with thousands of theologians. They quietly tell you that many of their dogmas are "above Reason," not approachable by Reason at all, and yet they proceed forthwith to write and speak positive volumes upon them! How can folly be more fatuous? But, indeed, they are if possible more fatuous. They seem to hold that we cannot have possession of the Spiritual unless we receive it under the patronage of the

ill-proved, the irrational, the baseless! It is one of the most disastrous errors that have infested the Human Head. It is one of the deadliest enemies of Civilisation.

Let it be laid to heart that it is either dishonest or imbecile for a man to open his mouth or to dip his pen in ink unless with the strict and sacred intention of being rational. Away with the ignorant, superstitious and self-stultifying fear of "free-thinking"! It is only as free-thinking and free beings that we can hope to grow into the full stature of the Sons of God. If this position had been bravely accepted since men began to speak and write about the Gods, it might have had the blessed effect of silencing all the irrational dogmatists that ever lived. May we respectfully beseech them to accept the position now? They cannot enjoy mental and moral health until they throw away all their artificial dogmas, and consent to cultivate only the Dogmas of Nature—which they will find to be sacred to the last fibre.

*The embargo upon Intelligence.*—The most infernal embargo ever imposed upon the Human Race, is the embargo upon Intelligence. All the Churches have shared more or less in the fearful folly and guilt of this imposition. Let them now combine to remove



it with all their strength and enthusiasm, if they desire to promote the welfare of men.

*Indigestible dogmas.*—It will be found that as a stone swallowed by mistake is to the corporeal digestive organs, so is an incomprehensible, or contradictory or superconscious dogma to the Human Mind. Swallowed, the stone and the irrational dogma alike make for death—the stone for the death of the body; the irrational dogma, for the death of the Mind.<sup>1</sup> Depend upon it, that the Immortal Soul can no more be tricked with impabulous fare than the mortal stomach.

*The Intellectual Centre of Gravity.*—Truth's centre of gravity is to be found in each sane Human Soul in so far as it is capable of weighing and comprehending truth. Ere any person can stand sure bodily, he must stand sure upon his own feet—not another's. Ere any person can stand sure mentally or spiritually, he must find out and rest upon his own intellectual centre of gravity, his own apprehension of truth—not another's. The whole Gospel of Truth, religious as well as

<sup>1</sup> Gregorovius rightly says—"Only those ideas are eternal which intellectually educate mankind" (*History of the City of Rome*, vol. vi. p. 678). Savonarola "sets no fresh current of thought in motion," and consequently leaves no mark in History (Symonds, *The Age of the Despots: The Renaissance in Italy*, vol. i. p. 485).

secular, is addressed to man individually. God has important business with each man; and all this business is addressed to each man's intelligence and conducted upon the basis of his own individual understanding, and not upon the basis of any other man's assertions. Each man is responsible to God for what he knows or has the means of knowing, and for nothing else whatever. Speaking about Art, Sir Joshua Reynolds rightly said—"A man can bring home wares only in proportion to the capital with which he goes to market."<sup>1</sup> The same in Theology. "If you had not known, you had not sinned; but knowing, your sin abideth with you." So Christ is reported to have said, and I don't think that the saying can be shaken. It amounts to this—that knowledge with moral freedom forms the basis of responsibility. *There is no sin but against knowledge.* "Everlasting No's" and "Everlasting Yea's" are to be found in the depths of every Human Soul. By the time we become perfect within the actual circle of our individual knowledge, we shall indeed be splendid fellows.

*The humblest may understand the most important truths.*—And I do not hesitate to say that the humblest may understand the

<sup>1</sup> *Sixth Discourse: Works*, vol. i. p. 396.

most important of religious truths. (Notice that I don't say the most abstruse, but the most important.) "The original make of their minds," as Locke observed, "is like that of other men; and they would be found not to want understanding fit to receive the knowledge of Religion, if they were a little encouraged and helped in it as they should be." In short, all men might understand if, not giving themselves up to a brutish stupidity in the things of their nearest concernment, they would simply "make a right use of their faculties and study their own understandings."<sup>1</sup> Kant also clearly recognises this beneficent truth: "The schools have no right to arrogate to themselves a more profound insight into a matter of general human concernment than that to which the great mass of men, ever held by us in the highest estimation, can without difficulty attain. The schools should therefore confine themselves to the elaboration of their universally comprehensible, and, from a moral point of view, highly satisfactory proofs."<sup>2</sup> I form, it must be confessed, a very low estimate of the *current* state of the intellectual powers of the average man and woman, but

<sup>1</sup> *Conduct of the Understanding*, s. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, Pref. to 2nd ed. p. xxxvii (Bohn trans.).

a very high estimate of their potentialities. "I have said ye are gods, and all of you are Children of the Most High":<sup>1</sup> so that, as already stated, there is no room in the world for priests, go-betweens, unless as wise instructors or educators. The mere man who, presuming upon his ordination as a minister of any earthly church, takes in hand to represent you and square your accounts for you with Almighty God, is either an imbecile or a most pernicious impostor. None can officially come between God and the individual, however humble the individual may be. Our methods of teaching may, of course, have to vary according to the intellectual growth and stature of the individual. For babes, spoon-meat surely, whilst they are babes, "for strong meat belongeth unto them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."<sup>2</sup> But as certainly as we wish babes to become men, they must in due course be fed with

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxii. 6. Yet the writer says in the passage immediately preceding—"They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness": a passage which might be specially applied to the stupid orthodoxy of the "orthodox" of all the irrational creeds. Like Don Juan, many of them might truly say—*Je n'aime pas les faiseurs de remontrances.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 14.

men's food, and be able to digest the food of men—each individual for himself. To the least intellectual, almost, it may be said—"Thou knowest the Commandments." No inquirer concerning Eternal Life need be turned from the Quest by intellectual difficulty. Everybody who understands what honesty means, understands the greatest truth that a free being can know, and may walk by the light of it in the way of Salvation. Theologians cannot ponder too much upon the significance of this simple and Divine truth. To any one truly concerned about Eternal Life, a large and happy reply to his inquiries would be—"Thou knowest the Commandments." We are all in a position to understand and to act upon the high precept expressed by Dante :

"Ever to that truth  
Which but the semblance of a falsehood wears,  
A man if possible should bar his lips ;  
Since although blameless, he incurs reproach."<sup>1</sup>

*The Individual is the unit of Authority and Responsibility.*—We are appointed by our mental constitution to seek for the Bedrock of our knowledge in our Rational Consciousness. Nothing short of this can give full satisfaction to our Intelligence. Intelligence must as far

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, c. 16.

as possible be satisfied. Intelligence is the very Soul of all spiritual health and strength. A complete confidence in Moral and other Law is necessary for our individual welfare ; and " the dissemination of truth and knowledge among all ranks of men is the only solid foundation for the certain though slow amelioration of the race." <sup>1</sup> Quoth the *Shû King* : " Open your mind and enrich my mind. Be like medicine (if necessary), which must distress the patient in order to cure his sickness." <sup>2</sup> Given a man who is determined to think to the best of his ability, and sooner or later you will find him arriving at sound conclusions. Ever shall judgment " return unto righteousness ; and all the upright in heart shall follow it." Should you wish to hold that the majority of mankind are incompetent to think correctly about what chiefly concerns them, it would necessarily follow, let me point out, that they could not be justly amenable to Judgment. I demand the unanimous consent of intelligent beings to this proposition. Thus the responsibility of each person before God seems to be personal and untransferable. The individual is and must be the unit of moral or religious authority and responsibility as far

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, *Collected Works*, vol. i. pp. 491-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. iii. p. 114.

as he himself is concerned ; and thus it will be found that there is room for the exercise of the noblest powers and the loftiest wisdom in the humblest human Life.

*The unemployed Fund of Spiritual Capital.*  
—From which considerations it may be seen that in the Human Mind at large, there is a potential *Fund of Spiritual Capital*, unemployed and unnoticed, which is ten thousand times more precious and important than could be found in ten thousand mountains of solid gold. Query : How are we to gain the ear of the great humming multitude of reckless and unwise people so as to draw their attention to the fact? This is an Age-long difficulty. It is the duty of all who wish to promote the welfare of Humanity to help us in the task.

### CHAPTER III

## THE NATURAL AND THE SUPER-NATURAL

*THE Supernatural must be tested by the Natural.*—Again, not only must all theological dogmas submit to be tried by the Human Intellect, but every statement claiming to be of a miraculous or supernatural character must submit to be tried by the Laws of Evidence. No one can escape from this position but through the overthrow of intellect and moral freedom. The converse proposition, namely, that statements claiming to be supernatural are *not* to be tried by the Laws of Evidence, is as false as Hell, and, corresponding with its falsehood, all false religions and false religious doctrines have been largely founded upon it. In other words, the moral sense of mankind—the real Voice of God to mankind—has been more or less confused and confounded in all ages by the innumerable priestcrafts of the world. The prime task of priestcraft has been to foster credulity,



to stupefy intelligence ; whereas the earnest desire of the true teacher must always be to clarify the intelligence of his pupil, to dissolve his doubts and help him to decipher the Divine Scrolls written upon his own heart, and arrive at the true reading thereof. Reason requires it. Sound Reason is essential to sound Godliness ; there cannot be sound Godliness without sound Reason. No person *as acting rationally*, can sin ; all sin is irrational. To speak of a rational sin were to speak of a right wrong. Show me an irrational man, and you necessarily show me a more or less ungodly man. All irrationality is ugly and repulsive. Every assault upon the Rational Consciousness is an assault upon the divinest Work of God that we are acquainted with. A very good definition of Virtue would be—Action according to Knowledge or Reason.

*Christ and Reason.*—Christ Himself is rarely represented as making any remarks which can be construed into an attack on the Rational. On the contrary, He generally treats it with profound respect and makes direct appeals to it. To plant Religion firmly in Reason is one of the highest services that can be rendered to man.

*Reason is the first and best ally of Religion.*—

It may be noted in passing that the word "rational" is immensely abused in connection with Religion. With the opponents of the Spiritual, mere worldliness is represented as the rational! whilst the defenders of Religion thus allow it to be abused without correction or rebuke.<sup>1</sup> Now the right reply to the secularist is that the worldly man *quoad* his worldliness,—the avaricious man, for example, is irrational. Religious men should always endeavour to vindicate Reason, both in life and doctrine, as the first and best ally of Religion.

*Paley on this subject.*—Paley makes some good remarks on this subject in his sermon upon *John's Message to Jesus*. "Show John those things which you do see and hear"—was Christ's answer to John's inquiry. "From this answer we are entitled," says Paley, "to infer (and this, I think, is the useful inference to be drawn from it) that the faith which he required, the assent which he demanded, was a rational assent and faith founded upon proof and evidence. His exhortation was, 'Believe me, for the very works' sake.' He did not bid Philip on that occasion, nor the disciples of John upon this, believe him because he was the Son of God; because he came down

<sup>1</sup> E.g. see Lilly, *Claims of Christianity*, p. 156.

from heaven ; because he was in the Father and the Father in him ; because he was with God and from God ; because the Father had given him the Spirit without measure ; because he was inspired in the largest and fullest sense of the word : for all these characters and pretensions, though the highest that could belong to any being whatsoever, to a prophet or to more than a prophet, *were nevertheless to be ascertained by facts.* To facts, therefore, our Lord appeals ; to facts he refers them, and to the demonstration which they afforded of his power and truth. For shutting their eyes against facts ; or, more properly speaking, for shutting their hearts and understandings against the proof and conclusion which facts afforded, he pronounces them liable to condemnation. They were to believe his words because of his works : that was exactly what he required. The works which my Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me, and the Father Himself who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.”<sup>1</sup> Just so. “ If I do not the works

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon XV.* It is likely, however, that Paley’s remarks carried him farther than he intended ; and, of course, he wrote on the assumption that he was proceeding upon authentic historic testimony.

of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him." "Believe me for the very works' sake": that was: Test the Supernatural by your own natural faculties: for Christianity has nothing to do with priestcraft; and priestcraft so abhorred Christianity that nothing less would satisfy it than the murder of Christ.

*Human testimony cannot rise higher than itself.*—Human testimony can never bear any higher stamp than that of human authority. Supposing a Divine Message to be sent to us by a human agent, it is *ipso facto* reduced to the level of human value unless it be accompanied by miraculous attestations before each separate audience; in which latter case the testimony of the audience itself will, in its turn, become the evidence for the miraculous attestations, and as such will have to be tried on its merits. Moses, for example, or the Mosaic writer, implicitly knew this when he represented the Hebrew Lawgiver as demanding of God by what sign he should convince the Israelites of the authority of his Divine Commission, and as having his shepherd's staff endowed on the spot with the capability of being metamorphosed into

a serpent and back again into a shepherd's staff.<sup>1</sup>

*Hume on miracles.*—Thus Hume rightly contends that our evidence for the truth of any assertion "is less than the evidence of the truth of our senses : because even in the first authors of our religion it was no greater ; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples ; nor can any one rest such confidence in their testimony as in the immediate object of his senses. The plain consequence is that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish " :<sup>2</sup> which argument

<sup>1</sup> To the same purpose read the story of Gideon and the fleece of wool, Judg. vi. 36-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, vol. ii. pp. 88, 94. See the interesting account of his discussion with the Jesuits, vol. i. p. 51. Mill writes : "We cannot admit a proposition as a law of Nature, and yet believe a fact in real contradiction to it. We must disbelieve the alleged fact, or believe that we were mistaken in admitting the supposed law" (*System of Logic*, vol. ii. p. 167) : wherein he is guilty of begging the question. If the supposed Law has been ordained by the Supreme Being, there is no *logical* contradiction in supposing that it may be abrogated at His pleasure. Obviously it begs the question if we say that a dead man *cannot* be restored to life ; but it is the inalienable right of intelligence to say, "Produce your evidence on the subject" : it resolves itself into a question of evidence simply. There can be no miracle, of course, within the domain of Necessary Truth,

is absolutely irrefutable. In other words, *the evidence of our own senses touching any question whatever, is our only criterion of certainty, and is necessarily final.*

God made us intellectually and morally free, but orthodox theologians wish to deprive us of our freedom, inasmuch as they wish to deprive us of independent thought and action. All sound Divinity must start from intelligent consciousness. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This is the invincible argument from Common Sense. If Reason will not conduct a man to Godliness, I am afraid he will not achieve it by any other Guide.

*All priestcraft resolves itself into a mere confidence trick.*—All priestcraft resolves itself into a mere confidence trick—"Believe what we say." Not so Religion. Religion does not demand your concurrence in any confidence trick. Religion appeals directly to the understanding. Christ makes all his great appeals to Common Sense. He assumes the Rational Consciousness as the basis and criterion of all sound religious thought and feeling. "If I had not done among them the things which none other man did, they had not had sin":<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 24.

in other words—"They know these things; if they had not known them they had not sinned"—which is purely rational. Again, "Ye also shall bear witness of me, because ye have been with me from the beginning":<sup>1</sup> that was, I take it, because they were in a position to give a clear account of his life and works. Again, "Whoever will not hear your words"—that was, whoever will not listen to Reason, "Shake off the dust of your feet"<sup>2</sup> against them. In all cases you must address yourself to the understanding: if you rightly wish to affect my mind, you must address my judgment. Talismanic words are of no account to the rational Human Soul. Hocus-pocus of any kind is below vanity. If you wish to give me a true heart-belief of anything, you must absolutely convince my judgment respecting it. Intelligence admits of no contradiction—not if it was brought to us by the Angel Gabriel. As long as I remain honestly unconvinced, I cannot honestly believe. If being unconvinced I say that I believe, I lie at once to you and to myself. If I seem to accept that of which I am not convinced, the mildest thing that can be justly said of me is that I am credulous. Credulity is lubberliness and sin. Until you can rationally convince a

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 14.

person of the truth of any proposition, you have no right to expect him to believe it. To believe on any other terms is unworthy of the humblest intelligence. It must not be forgotten—a thing which so many people seem to forget or fail to notice, that as the Human Mind can apprehend the physically great as well as the physically small—the Sun in the Heavens as well as the candle in the house, so, morally or spiritually, it can apprehend the greatness of religious truth as well as the smallness of animal fact.

*It is preposterous to suppose that any one can be condemned for refusing to accept the irrational.*—It is absurd to suppose that any soul can be condemned, or even blamed or called in question by a just God, for being rational. It is equally absurd to suppose that any soul can be condemned, blamed or called in question, for not being irrational or supra-rational. This must be obvious to all sensible persons. The measure of a man's intelligence is necessarily the just measure of his responsibility. Notice that this indubitable truth utterly subverts all the orthodoxies. As to things actually beyond our knowledge, Lewes properly observes that "the unknown is only a prolongation of the known, and is trusted only so far as it is in strict conformity



with the known.”<sup>1</sup> Become irrational and you forthwith fall into the brutish. Be not as the horse or as the mule which hath no understanding, whose mouth must be held in by bit and bridle. In his book *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, Father Ohrwalder “seems inclined to sum up the Mahdi's history in a single sentence, viz.—He began life as a regular fanatic, then became a hypocrite, and ultimately died a debauchee, of fatty degeneration of the heart”:<sup>2</sup> an admirable summary of an irrational life and a fitting end to it.

*There are only three courses open to the judgment.*—In any statement or doctrine offered for our acceptance, there are three courses, and only three, open to our choice: our judgment may (1) accept it, or (2) reject it, or (3) remain in a state of uncertainty with regard to it. In other words, our judgment may say (1) that it is true, or (2) that it is false, or (3) that it does not know whether it be true or false. In the second case it is obviously our duty to dismiss the matter at once; but as to the first and third cases, the thing which we absolutely judge to be true must naturally have more weight with us than

<sup>1</sup> *History of Philosophy*, vol. i., Introd. p. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Athenæum*, 1892, vol. ii. p. 657.

anything which we judge to be uncertain. There is no wise departure from this law. The truth as we know it, if we be honest men, must bear down not only all contradictions but all opposing uncertainties. The truth which we actually know is paramount to all opposing considerations. *The truth which we do know, and that only, makes an imperial and Divine and invincible demand upon our acceptance and loyalty.* That which our judgment declares to be false, is obviously to be rejected at once. That of which our judgment is uncertain, is obviously of no importance whatever as compared with what it declares to be true. Take, for example, the proposition, "Stealing is disgraceful," and contrast it, say, with the proposition, "The Epistles of Paul are the infallible Word of God." Examining the former, "Stealing is disgraceful," we find that it entirely harmonises with our moral intuitions, and that it is absolutely binding upon us as moral beings. Examining the second, "The Epistles of Paul are the infallible Word of God," we at once see that it demands inquiry; we find that it calls our critical faculties into play; that it leaves us in serious doubt as to its truth; that it brings us under no natural obligation to believe it; that it imposes no penalty upon us for dis-

believing it. Nay, it is our firm duty to disbelieve it unless we can rationally convince ourselves of its truth. The doubtful has no claim upon our allegiance. The claim of truth is absolute and invincible. As long as our judgment remains unconvinced by an argument—even if the disputant be the Apostle Paul, we are morally bound to accept the deliverance of our own judgment in preference to that argument. To refuse the deliverance of our own judgment, logically and necessarily involves us in scepticism towards and infidelity to the truth, however religious we may take our refusal to be.

*The choice given us by religious persecutors.*—And yet thousands of priests and theologians have not hesitated to descend upon mankind with the fearful ultimatum—“Your brains or damnation!” notwithstanding the all-important fact that Almighty God furnished us with our brains (*i.e.* our intellect), and nothing but our brains, to guide us either through this world or towards that which is to come. Let us make ceaseless war against this huge, goggle-eyed, irrational, soul-devouring Giant of Superstition. In death as in life Reason must prevail if there is order and beneficence in the Government of the Universe.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCRIPTURE MUST BE TESTED BY REASON

*All Scripture must be tested by Reason.*—As a corollary to the proposition that the Supernatural must be tested by the Natural, it naturally follows that all Scripture must be tested and tried by Reason. If we are not prepared to interpret Scripture in a broad and rational way, we must be led into all manner of extravagances and grotesque absurdities regarding it. Briefly consider the matter.

If you are not going to exercise honest discourse of Reason upon every part of Scripture, by what rule do you propose to reject, say—

*Transubstantiation?* The letter of Scripture says—"This is my body; this is my blood. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood drink indeed." If you do not propose to reason on these words the Romanists have something to say for Transubstantiation. But exercise a wise discourse of Reason on

the passage, and you may profitably conclude that a certain lesson is taught under cover of a very strong metaphor or catachresis. Or how but by wise discourse of Reason shall we reject

*Monasticism or Celibacy*, as scriptural doctrine? The letter of Scripture says—"It is not good to marry."<sup>1</sup> Accept these words as an inspired dogma—not to be reasoned about, and if you be consistent, you will have to accept celibacy as a Divine doctrine; but criticise the words and the context rationally, and you will probably conclude that the Apostle did not intend that they should bear a universal construction, and that they were nothing more than a counsel of prudence to the converts to whom they were addressed—a counsel of prudence in view of the trying circumstances amid which they were placed. Or how but by Reason shall we reject

*Quakerism*? The letter of Scripture says—"Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."<sup>2</sup> Accept this counsel literally and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 8; and apparently Matt. xix. 10, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Almost needless to say, the Quaker himself is not generally a Quaker in respect of this precept! Burke has wisely said that "all virtue which is impracticable is spurious." Perfection includes a great deal, but, rationally, it can never be taken to include the impracticable.

you immediately lay open your worldly estate to the depredations of any blackguard who knows your creed; but read the passage rationally, and it may be possible to conclude that it means nothing more than that we ought to exercise a wise generosity in giving to the utmost of our ability. The letter of Scripture says—"Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Accept these words literally, and you set up the impracticable or ruinous system of non-resistance; you resign, it may be, all your corporeal and worldly interests to the Devil; but think of them rationally, and you may only find in them a strongly metaphorical inculcation of the beautiful and sacred duty of showing forbearance and long-suffering towards those who trouble you. Otherwise we shall have to criticise the passage as such passages have been criticised elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Mr. William James properly notes that the non-resisting spirit may, by non-resistance, "cut off his own survival," and that "the whole history of constitutional government is a commentary on the excellence of resisting evil, and when one cheek is smitten, of smiting back and not turning the other cheek also."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Failure of the Churches*, pp. 85-88 (Nash).

<sup>2</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 355-6. The

It should further be noted that Christ himself (according to the Scripture narrative) was not always a non-resister. Consider his tremendous invectives against Scribes, Pharisees and lawyers. Consider also his onslaught upon the money-changers in the Temple.

*Faithfulness.*—The Scripture says—"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the depths of the sea, and it shall be done." Construe literally and you must conclude that a faithful man may with a word, spirit, say, the Grampian Mountains into the North Sea; but interpret rationally and you need have no difficulty in finding the true meaning—Be faithful and ye shall obtain sublime victories over mighty obstacles. Thought and life according to thought are the mightiest of all progressive and even explosive agencies. Not only are they the chief agencies through which mountains may be levelled,

Mahometans improve upon the doctrine of non-resistance. Hasan the son of Ali had a slave who threw "a dish on him boiling hot, as he sat at table," whereupon, fearing his master's resentment, he fell on his knees and said: "Paradise is for those who bridle their anger." Hasan replied: "I am not angry." The slave proceeded: "And for those who forgive men." "I forgive you," said Hasan. The slave added: "For God loveth the beneficent." "Since it is so," said Hasan, "I give you your liberty and four hundred pieces of silver." Sales, *Koran*, note to c. iii.

but they are the chief agencies through which, under God, we may hope to blow up the Strongholds of Satan and help to establish the Kingdom of God upon the Earth. The deep, noble Thinker sitting in his room may be helping to achieve conquests undreamt of by Caesars and Napoleons; he may be one of the chief agents in undermining the Kingdom of Darkness.

*Generally.*—The Scripture says—"Whosoever taketh not up his cross daily," etc. Literal interpretation—Carry a cross daily about with you. Rational interpretation—Suffer, if need be, in the cause of virtue without flinching. Heroism not mummery. Everything is trifling compared with Virtue

"Immortal, never-failing friend of man."

The Scripture says—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Literally, the rich man is hopelessly lost; rationally, riches must be prudently regarded and carefully administered; otherwise they become a snare and a temptation to lead you far from the paths of Life.

*Immoral passages.*—But there are many passages which Reason rejects as utterly immoral, irreligious and intolerable. The



Scripture says—"He that sacrificeth unto any God, but unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. xxii. 20). "And they entered into a covenant . . . that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath" (2 Chron. xv. 12-15). Accept such laws and doings as Divinely authorised, and you set up the most damnable warranties for religious persecution. It was such passages as these that, being received uncritically and irrationally, entangled even the noblest minds among the Reformers, and to some extent—nay, to a disastrous extent, blighted the Reformation. Reason upon them (as the Reformers ought to have done) and you will come to the altogether seemly and gracious conclusion that the Mosaic Legislator in the first case, and Asa in the second, knew not what manner of spirit God required—knew not altogether what Religion was.

The Scripture says—"O daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Accept this commission

as Divinely authorised, and you will convert the man of God into something worse than a Shawnee savage, or perhaps even a Pan-German. Apply the holy light of Reason to the passage, and you will confidently say that it is devilish and damnable ; and consequently that it should have no place in any book purporting to be the Word of God. Butler noted that a passage asserted to be a Revelation "may contain clear immoralities or contradictions, and either of these would prove it false."<sup>1</sup> The passage just quoted is an instance of the kind : it will not pass as the Word of God. "Had ye known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." We may rest assured that no savagery, either practical or theoretical, ever enjoyed the Divine Sanction.

"Les Dieux savent trop bien connaitre l'innocence."

The Scripture says—"I loved Jacob and I hated Esau, and laid his mountain and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness" (Mal. i. 2, 3). The thing is incredible. It exhibits the Divine Father as being guilty of the most gross and savage

<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, part ii. c. iii. But he has not a clear view of the subject as a whole.

favouritism. In the wise view of Reason, Malachi appears to have gone quite beyond his commission as an interpreter of the Divine Government. I think we may safely take it that with the Deity there is no preference for Israelite over Edomite, no more partiality for Jew than for Gentile.

Think of the passage about the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut. xxiii. 2-6) being represented as Word of God!

Scripture asks—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" and replies—"Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. xiii. 23). This is first-rate metaphor, but it is neither an accurate rendering of Human Nature, nor of Moral Truth.

Scripture makes Christ say—"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers" (John x. 8). Respect for Christ will not permit us to believe that he ever uttered so slanderous a saying.

Scripture says—"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God" (Rom. xiii. 1-6). Accept the passage as it stands, and here again we have the doctrine of non-resistance to wicked rulers, and acquiescence in the preposterous theories of Hobbes and Berkeley; but consider the

passage broadly and in view of the Apostle's own practice, and you will probably come to the conclusion that it was written hastily and inconsiderately.

In short, there is no reasonable course open to us but to subject every part of Scripture to a strictly rational examination. It is, I submit, not only our privilege but our duty to prove all things and to cling to that which is good. If a spirit on wings came and addressed himself to us, it would be not only our privilege but our strict duty to satisfy our judgment that he was from God. It is necessary to destroy the Temple of Fum the son of Fo with all its paraphernalia and mystifying utensils.

*The more important the matter under survey, the more critical should we be regarding it.*—Plainly, the right attitude for all men to take up is this—The more important the matter under survey, the more critical ought we to be concerning it. Every intelligent man must admit this to be a correct canon of conduct. But what is the almost universal attitude of the Orthodoxies? Why, the very reverse of this! The more important the less critical! Give all your brain-power, indeed, to the consideration of your banking account; buy your sausages with all the judgment you can bring

to bear upon them, but do not risk an independent thought—do not ask a critical question—swallow whatever bolus orthodoxy may present to you as medicine and pabulum for your Immortal Soul! The presumption and folly of such conduct is writ so large that even simpletons should be shocked at it. The orthodox have a most unhappy knack of taking a wrong view of things.

“To the ignorant crying up of Faith in opposition to Reason,” as Locke wrote, “we may, I think, in good measure, ascribe those absurdities that fill almost all the Religions which possess and divide mankind. For men having been principled with an opinion that they must not consult Reason in the things of Religion, however apparently contradictory to Common Sense and the very principles of all their Knowledge, have let loose their fancies and natural superstition; and have been by them led into so strange opinions and extravagant practices in Religion, that a considerate man cannot but stand amazed at their follies; and judge them so far from being acceptable to the great and wise God, that he cannot avoid thinking them ridiculous and offensive to a sober, good man. So that in effect, Religion, which should most distinguish us from the beasts, is that wherein men often

appear most irrational and more senseless than beasts themselves."<sup>1</sup>

*The High Court of Intelligence.*—All Scripture, therefore, must be tried by, and commend itself to, Reason ; otherwise there need be no end to the extravagances and absurdities of doctrine, or to the savageries of conduct, to which we may be committed. In all cases of mental difficulty and perplexity concerning any religious, as concerning any other proposition, the only available remedy is to apply to the High Court of Intelligence.<sup>2</sup> This is the Supremest and most Sacred Court that God has constituted in this world—the Supremest and most Sacred Court that sits in this world. If at any time it cannot settle a question to its satisfaction (and such questions frequently come before it), this most Supreme and Sacred Court will seek and wait in a patient and dignified manner for more light, more evidence, upon the question before pronouncing its verdict upon it. Intelligence

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, bk. iv. c. 18. s. 11.

<sup>2</sup> In his best moments Luther subscribed to this doctrine : "I shall admit of no restraints in interpreting the Word of God ; for the Word of God, which inculcates the liberty of all, must be free" (Roscoe, *Life of Leo the Tenth*, vol. iv. p. 19). But see, unhappily, his fixed views on the Eucharist, for example, and his part in the banishment of Carlostadt (*ib.* pp. 68-69).

will not suffer itself to be concussed by any irrational dogma, or by any bad witness however pretentious. Intelligence insists upon loyalty to the Highest, is indeed the Sacred Vicegerent of the Highest. To be irrational is to commit treason against the Highest. By the sacred Fiat of Intelligence a brave man will stand forth against the Devil and all his angels if need be, and prove that he is a Son and Soldier of the Living God.

## CHAPTER V

### BELIEF, CERTAINTY AND FAITH

*CONSCIOUSNESS is the ground of Belief, Certainty and Faith: our first duty is to think aright.*—What disastrous floods of nonsense have issued from irrational heads upon the subject of Belief and Faith! Reason, indeed, has been well-nigh washed away by the damnable torrent. Our first duty is to think aright, and to induce our fellow-men to think aright in sacred as well as secular affairs, for it is quite clear that unless we think rightly, we are not likely to act rightly. But, alas, the priest is carefully educated *not* to think, and to teach and concuss others *not* to think in matters of supreme importance. *They are positively educated as ministers, apostles and propagandists of ignorance and falsehood.* How different the attitude of the wise man. “When you hear words distasteful to your mind,” says the *Shû King*, “you must inquire whether they be not right; when you hear words in accordance with your own views, you must inquire whether they be not



contrary to what is right."<sup>1</sup> So sacred is Thought. Virtue demands of us the most absolute honesty, the most absolute candour in thinking. Sound thinking is the first essential in sound Government; it is the essential condition of sound bricklaying. They who have a passion for sound thinking are likely to develop a love for sound living. Infuse into the Proletariat, for example, a passion for sound thinking, and you will go far to reform the very slums out of existence. Without sound thinking the slums will continue to exist. Infuse into all men a passion for sound thinking, and the Devil will find that his occupation in this world has almost gone. Through hostility to Thought in sacred affairs, Mankind, spiritually, have been left rudderless and distracted on the floods of Chaos, like shipwrecked sailors on a tossing and starless ocean.

*The irrational is the source of every kind of ruin.*—Every man who has any respect either for his Maker or for himself should be able to see that Reason is the prime necessity of his higher existence in his spiritual as well as in his temporal affairs. Every man of sense clearly understands that when he be-

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. iii. p. 100. A most illustrious instance of intellectual integrity. The wise man is always seeking to test and verify his knowledge; the fool is always striving to disguise and maintain his ignorance.

comes quite irrational in his temporal concerns, he is a fit person for the Terrestrial Bedlam. It is his highest interest to realise with equal certitude that still more evil consequences must be entailed upon him should he become irrational in his spiritual concerns; that if there exists in Space a Spiritual Bedlam, his spiritual irrationality is likely to conduct him to that Den of Dolour. In view of such a frightful possibility, every sensible man should heroically strive to attain the spiritually rational and lucent even whilst he is an inhabitant of this solid Globe.

Why should anybody cast off his ordinary methods of Thought when he thinks about Religion! Satan can devise no more devilish trick for the tripping up of the heels of poor mortals. Such a one is a first-rate man for the service of Baalim and the Groves. He is not fit to minister in the Temple of the Living God—the Creator of Rational Souls. All the scoundrels of the Universe in convocation could devise nothing worse for men than that they should be irrational: we can devise nothing better for them than that they should be strictly rational.

*Meaning of Belief.*—Belief, Certainty and Faith, what do we really mean by these words? In theological discussion especially, it is highly

necessary that we should have a clear meaning attached to them.

Take Belief first. Belief, I think, should be regarded as nothing more than the intellectual conclusion which we draw from an intellectual or rational operation. In other words, neither virtue nor vice is necessarily involved in the exercise of our believing faculty ; indeed, there can neither be virtue nor vice in a mere belief. Thus Aristotle : " We get our character from our deliberate preference of things good or bad, and not from our opinions." <sup>1</sup> " Sir," said Dr. Johnson, " are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles without having good practice ? " <sup>2</sup> And a modern writer on Logic properly says : " Judgment is not arbitrary or dependent on the will ; I must in thought, affirm the union or the separation of the two terms according as the relation of agreement or disagreement is perceived to exist between them." <sup>3</sup> It is not in our power, indeed, to *believe* in what we perceive to be irrational.

Take a case. Smith, a respectable man, tells me that he met Brown in the Strand.

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Ethics*, bk. ii. c. ii. s. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, vol. vi. p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Bowen, *Logic*, p. 106.

The assertion appears to be quite rational, and, on Smith's evidence, I believe what he tells me without question. Or he tells me that he has just come from Mark Lane and that wheat has risen two shillings a quarter. This statement also appears to be quite rational, so I once more accord my *belief*, not only through the credit which I am prepared to give to his word, but also, it might be, from a previous rational anticipation that the price of wheat was likely to rise. But, on the other hand, if Smith, meeting me in the Strand, were to asseverate that he had just seen a covey of partridges whirring along Fleet Street, I should indulge in the gravest doubts as to his veracity and probably conclude that the covey of partridges was purely subjective and peculiar to Smith's own experience: that is to say, I should most probably conclude that the partridges had merely whirled through his own brain. In short, I should not be rationally able to *believe* his tale: it would sound like certain fish stories. Thus, as already noted, Belief or disbelief is the purely intellectual result of a purely intellectual operation—a mental assent accorded to good and sufficient evidence, or withheld from bad and insufficient evidence; whilst to yield assent to bad or insufficient evidence, or to no evidence whatever, is, properly

speaking, sheer credulity. Belief is rational assent ; credulity is irrational assent.

*In the case of children.*—It is said that “children may be brought up to believe anything religious.”<sup>1</sup> This is a great mistake. They may be brought up to *accept* or *assume* anything false to be true, but not in the right sense to *believe* it. All true belief is the result of a rational process, and whatever dross and slag of falsehood may adhere to it is to be removed by rational process until the genuine belief alone remains. In so far as Messrs. Smith and Brown are irrational they are merely the children of Chaos and Old Night—the source of confusion and disaster to themselves, and of affliction to other people. Looking back upon the false doctrines which we may at one time have entertained, but from which we may have been emancipated, we shall find that we never had a conviction or true belief, or anything like a conviction or true belief, that they were true, and that they were nothing better in our minds than an evil deposit of traditional lubberdom.

*The meaning of Certainty.*—The mental state implied by the word Certainty differs considerably from the mental state commonly described as belief. It has been said that belief, raised to the highest power, becomes

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. iv. p. 111.

certainty.<sup>1</sup> In common language, says Sir William Hamilton, "the word belief is frequently used to denote an inferior degree of certainty;"<sup>2</sup> but he goes on to argue that all truth, as we know it, is ultimately resolvable into belief. For my part I think that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the two words. The intellectual state inspired by the word certainty I take to be a concomitant of unquestionable knowledge, whilst any assent short of that of unquestionable knowledge would be properly described as a belief.<sup>3</sup> For instance, I properly say—I am *certain* that two and two make four. By no jugglery of the intellect is it conceivable that they can amount to any other number. It is a Necessary Truth,—a First Principle upon which we are compelled *by our intelligence* to proceed in all conceivable cases,—an intuition of the true,—an *a priori* cognition behind which we cannot go, and which we cannot even call in question without self-stultification and intellectual self-effacement. The man who might propose to conduct his life on the two-and-two-make-five principle, would be of no use in this world.

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures*, vol. iv. p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> This appears to have been Locke's view. See his *Fourth Letter for Toleration*; *Works*, vol. iii. p. 461.

"We assert that what all think must really be," says Aristotle sagely, "and he that tries to overthrow this proof will not state anything more convincing:"<sup>1</sup> although, let it always be remembered, we know no more how such convictions are produced than how we ourselves were produced.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, if somebody of credit tells me that he has a grey horse, it would, without further evidence, be more proper for me to say, "I *believe* it to be true" than "I am *certain* that it is true," as it is conceivable that my informant might, for some purpose or other, be trying to impose upon me. In another field take, for example, the proposition that the Apostle Paul accomplished the missionary labours ascribed to him in the New Testament: it would be more proper to say "I *believe* it" than "I am *certain* of it"; whilst it would be absolutely correct to say—"I am *certain* that stealing is sinful." We stand in a state of certitude towards any proposition—we hold any proposition with certainty if it afford complete evidence of its truth; whether it be of *a priori* principles or observed facts; whether deduced from the former, or induced from the latter. Certainty, in short, is impregnable knowledge; a state of mind

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Ethics*, bk. x. c. ii. s. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, *Essays*, ii. c. xx. p. 326.

which, we are convinced, cannot be altered by any fresh accession of knowledge, whilst a mere belief indicates a state of mind subject to correction ; subject to change by an accession of new evidence or the refutation of old ; by the arrival, it might be, of a postman, or even by the perusal of a line in *The Gutter Gazette*. Certainty is the consciousness of something that is self-evident or proved beyond doubt. Belief is that state of mind arising about something from testimonies, observations, contingencies, experiments which, though they may be persuasive and impressive, still leave room for doubt. Therefore I think it would be useful in psychological and theological discussion especially, to set up a distinction between certainty and belief, and to keep that distinction in clear view.

*The meaning of Faith: some loose renderings.*—There is probably no word in the language used more loosely than the word Faith, whilst there is no word that calls for a more steady and definite meaning. Ask any hundred persons what meaning they really attach to the word, and ninety-nine of them will probably give you a very indefinite and unsatisfactory answer. We have the vague expressions “the Jewish Faith,” the “Christian Faith,” and so forth, signifying whatever code



of articles or doctrines the speaker may include under the expression. Most philosophers, even, speak of Faith more or less vaguely. For example, Locke in one place says: "Faith is the assent to any proposition not made out by the deduction of Reason, but upon the credit of the proposer as coming from God in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truth to man we call Revelation";<sup>1</sup> whilst in the same work he writes: "Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind, which if it be regulated as is our duty, *cannot be afforded to anything but upon good reason, and cannot be opposite to it.*"<sup>2</sup> Goethe speaking of Faith says—it is "a profound sense of security for the present and future"; and that "this assurance springs from confidence in an immense, all-powerful and inscrutable Being"; that it is "a holy vessel into which every one stands ready to pour his feelings, his understanding, his imagination, as perfectly as he can":<sup>3</sup> which is all very vague. Carlyle speaks of it as "Loyalty to some inspired teacher, some spiritual hero."<sup>4</sup>

As used by many people the word Faith is synonymous with sheer credulity. With

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, iv. 17. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iv. 17. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Autobiography*, bk. xiv. p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Heroes and Hero-Worship*: As a Divinity, p. 12.

the Romanist and the Ritualist, for example, it signifies a blind assent to ecclesiastical dogmas—the dogmas of what they are pleased to call the Catholic Church. The late Cardinal Newman, for instance, when he buried his doubts and difficulties in the Popish Temple of Infallibility, supposed that he had accomplished an act of Faith, whereas this most luctuose proceeding was not an act of Faith at all, but a most baneful act of nerveless credulity. The orthodox Romanist would call the slitting of a heretic's nose, or the cropping of his ears, or the disjoining of his body on the rack, or the choking of him in a lime-kiln, or the burning of him upon the top of a tar-barrel, as an act of Faith, whereas it is merely an act of most cruel and fiendish devilry.<sup>1</sup> Your true born Anglican, with his easy indifference to logic and sound sense, will look upon The Thirty-nine Articles or “the Apostles' Creed” as the Faith without putting himself to the trouble of attaching any definite meaning to the words. Your Calvinist of the

<sup>1</sup>From first to last persecution must have greatly tended to deform doctrinal Christianity. As Paley remarks—it “vitiates the public morals by driving men to prevarication, and commonly ends in a general though secret infidelity, by imposing, under the name of revealed religion, systems of doctrine which men cannot believe and dare not examine” (*Morals and Political Philosophy*, bk. vi. c. 10).

strictest sect will call it Faith to look upon the whole Human Race as lying naturally since "the Fall," in a state of Reprobation and Damnation. The region of Faith has become the region of mysticism,—of intellectual Fogland. Canon Oakley, for instance, is reported to have said in his unregenerate days: "I myself was never in a Catholic Church but once in these islands, *when I made a speedy retreat under panic of conscience.*"<sup>1</sup> This passage graphically illustrates the errant feebleness of the poor Canon's intellect. In his riper age he would have fled from a Protestant place of worship in a corresponding flutter of terror. Such a Canon was the very man to manage an orthodox praying-mill and eat fish on Fridays in the name of "the Faith." There is no end to the scurvy and grotesque meanings which have been yoked to that word of Fate—no end to the confusions and disasters and devilries which have arisen from the abuse of that little word.

Frequently, again, it is erroneously used instead of the word "deduction" or "inference." For example, Dean Mansel wrote: "In this impotence of Reason we are compelled to take refuge in Faith."<sup>2</sup> Rather should he

<sup>1</sup> Purcell, *Life of Manning*, vol. i. p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> *Metaphysics, etc.*, p. 383.

have said that in certain cases of computation and speculation we have to be contented with *rational inferences*.

*The true meaning of Faith.*—What is the true meaning, then, of this tremendous word? I would venture to suggest that Faith might be properly defined as action inspired by love of moral principle and in conformity with a rational hope,—Action in accord with the demands of moral principle *strengthened by unverified considerations*,—action or disposition to act in accordance with our knowledge and rational belief in the face of difficulty, doubt and danger. This, and no other, is, I think, the Faith of all the martyrs. In no case, perhaps, has action by Faith the full assurance of action by sight, because it is in the very nature of such actions to operate partly, at least, upon the basis of the unverified. In love of goodness, yet in hope of ultimate deliverance, the faithful man works on at his great work in difficulty, pain, torture, perhaps, and darkness; and it is this grand spirit of his which constitutes the great glory of his contest. If the “Faith”—that irrational something—of the orthodox were as strong as it is commonly asserted to be: *if it were a spiritual state superior, as they maintain, to the rational, they would have no fear even of*

*death, and Martyrdom itself would be deprived of its chief note, namely, that of self-sacrifice.* We need scarcely hesitate to say that if it were a *verifiable fact* that the Martyr immediately goes to Bliss, there would probably be a great many candidates for martyrdom. If it were a *verifiable fact* that the Hero perishing in battle goes straight to Valhalla, few soldiers, probably, would seek to avoid the mortal shock. But the existence of Valhalla is not verified: *i.e.* not positively impressed upon any man's consciousness; consequently, when the Hero and the Martyr voluntarily perish, it is in the way of rational self-sacrifice, — devotion to moral principle under the shadow and the pains of death, intermingled with more or less hope in the Unverified Hereafter. This, when rightly analysed, seems to be *their* grand Act of Faith, — *their* work of Reason and Goodness, fortified by sacred Hope. Thus the irrational can have no part in a true man's Faith any more than in a true man's affections.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is said that the German word *Aberglaube* signifies "extra belief, belief beyond what is certain and verifiable. Our word superstition has the same meaning by derivation, but has come to mean a childish but craven religiosity. Not so with the German word. There Goethe can say—*Der Aberglaube ist die poesie des Lebens*" (Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 58).

*Faith at work.*—Let us now see how our definition works out in practice. Knowledge and Belief indicate, as we have seen, a purely intellectual attitude, and do not necessarily involve moral states or characteristics in the knowing or believing mind. A dishonest man, even, knows that honesty is the right thing, but acts dishonestly. That is to say, his actions do not correspond with his knowledge—they are *unfaithful*. On the other hand, an honest man not only knows that honesty is the right thing, but acts honestly—*i.e.* in strict accordance with, or faithfulness to, his knowledge. The very devils, we are told, know the truth and believe in the existence of the Powers of Truth; nay, they not only believe but, probably, cannot keep from believing; but they act clean contrary to their belief, and are therefore devilish—sinning the sin which is unto death. The saint also believes, but at the same time he acts in strict conformity with his belief, thus proving his Faith; and in his faithfulness he becomes heroic and sublime. Many Scriptural utterances on Faith illustrate this interpretation: *e.g.* “It is required in a steward that a man be found faithful.” No dubiety about the meaning of the word in that passage.

Consider it further. Your Faith in a

principle, what is it? Simply the amount of dependence which you are prepared to place upon that principle from your knowledge of it, together with the amount of valour or self-sacrifice which you are prepared to undergo in support of it. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Why? Because, surely, the wicked man knows that his principles are not worth calling principles,—that they are utterly rickety,—that they will carry him through no difficulty,—that his only chance, and that a miserable one, is to turn back and run the moment that a loud enough alarm is sounded. But on the other hand, the righteous is bold as a lion for the best of all reasons. He believes that his righteous principles are, to the last degree, rational and trustworthy; and that he cannot do better, if need be, than get killed upon them. To endure martyrdom for the true is an absolutely rational, as well as heroic, sacrifice. Thus the case in favour of his principles is altogether complete; quite correspondent with what his Divinely created Mind has taught him. His principles, he feels assured, are absolutely reliable up to and through the very Gates of Death.

Take it in another way: What is a faithful person? Surely, one who fulfils his obligations

whether written or spoken or only implied. He enters into a contract : he will strain every nerve, if need be, to comply with every term of the contract in the widest extent. He is not contented to know or believe merely, that he ought to fulfil the whole contract, but he will have no real peace of mind over it until he has actually fulfilled it. He is not a faithful man for merely knowing or believing that he ought to do such and such a thing. The crucial point is to do it to the best of his ability. *There* comes in the Faith and the proof of his Faith. Faith is inseparable from the desire and the effort to do something dutiful. It is the very mainspring of action. Let the world be filled with *this* kind of Faith and it will be resplendent with spiritual glory. No gainsayers, I hope, to that proposition.

Glance at the story of Abraham's Faith. Assuming it for our present purpose to be historically authentic, it was no mere creed. A mere belief in the Divine Power and Providence was, in itself, of no moral account. But, according to the story, Abraham did far more than believe in God : *he acted in strict conformity with his belief*. In his acts we behold his Faith. By his acts he was called faithful Abraham and the Father of the Faithful.



“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the Armies of the Living God?” asks the youthful David. The matter does not end in valorous sentiment, in mere creed or belief. Not at all. David’s Faith was altogether superior to any hallucination of that kind: “Thy Servant will go forth and fight with him,” and he did so. The Faith lay in his disposition to act according to the best of his ability; the deed was in strict accordance with David’s belief or sense of duty. “A lion and a bear came out of the wood, *and I rose against them, and slew them.*” He did not believe merely that it would be a capital idea to slay them, but with great manhood he rose up and did it,—proved his disposition and determination to act according to the best of his knowledge and ability,—his conviction of duty, and thus became for all time one of the foremost of lion-slayers and giant-slayers.

“Who shall ascend into the Hill of God?” asks the Psalmist. The man, he answers, who, among other great qualities, “speaketh the truth as it is in his heart”: not the man who merely holds a certain belief about something, but who actually does something in strict conformity with his belief; who speaketh the truth as it is in his heart. He that

doeth such things shall be a sure-footed person.

"I delight to do thy will": that was to act in accordance with his heart-belief.

"I believed, therefore have I spoken": spoken in accordance with my belief, spoken faithfully.

"Be thou faithful unto death": not merely hold a belief unto death! Nobody can keep himself from holding many beliefs even unto death. But that is not what is principally wanted: the point is to be faithful—to act in strict accordance with your belief to the best of your ability. As Disraeli said: "To believe is nothing unless we act. Speculation should sharpen practice."<sup>1</sup> Consistent orthodoxy would leave us nothing to practise.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed in thee, because he trusteth in thee," or places his actual confidence in the Supreme.

So with Apostle Paul: "As it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak" (2 Cor. iv. 13). The belief rises into the Faith of Action. Faith can no more exist, it would seem, without works than love without an out-

<sup>1</sup> *Alroy*, x. 17.

flow of feeling ; or charity without charitable effort. See also the famous chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It would be more sensible to say, "Add to your Knowledge, Faith," than "Add to your Faith, Knowledge": just as it would be more sensible to say, "Add to your navigation, boldness," rather than "Add to your boldness, navigation."

The great break down of Peter was in respect of his Faith (that was in the region of Morals): not in respect of his belief, which was merely intellectual and, presumably, remained unshaken. (So perhaps in the case of Judas.) He recoiled from the dangers of the situation ; but braced himself for endurance on a later day.

Enough has been said, I think, to show that the word Faith differs essentially in its meaning from the words Belief and Certainty, and that it would be expedient to use these words as strictly as possible in the sense attached to them in the foregoing pages. In these discussions I shall try to use them according to the meanings indicated. For the sake of clearness let us place those meanings in one view.

(1) Belief is a mental assent yielded to observation, experiment, testimony, induction,

but admitting the possibility of alteration. It indicates a purely intellectual operation.

(2) Certainty is mental assent founded upon something self-evident, or proved beyond doubt by logical process. It also indicates a purely intellectual attitude.

(3) Faith is the disposition and determination to act in the moral field to the best of our ability in strict accordance with our knowledge and belief, and against difficulty and danger. More shortly—our Faith is our practical adherence to our principles. The amount of our Faith seems to be the amount of our practical adherence to our principles in all kinds of circumstances.

Let it therefore be taken as axiomatic that the Rational Consciousness is the only firm ground of Belief, Certainty and Faith. As already remarked, we do not, in our temporal affairs, expect a man to act upon any other basis than that of actual knowledge and belief. We justly conclude him a fool if, in temporal affairs, he persists in acting without sufficient knowledge and belief. Consider the losses that are incurred, the ruin that is frequently wrought through our having been credulous, say, in money matters. Many of us, probably, can look back upon occasions when, in temporal affairs, we acted credulously—*i.e.*

without sufficient knowledge or rational belief in the policy which we were following, and went wrong in consequence: reaping to ourselves sorrow and regret and pain as the harvest thereof, and feeling that we had been fools for the folly of our doings. So must it be in all our spiritual and eternal concerns. Reason, as Bishop Butler observed, "is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge anything, even Revelation itself."<sup>1</sup> "Every man's reason, as Bolingbroke said, "is every man's oracle."<sup>2</sup> It is absolutely true.

*Faith must be rooted in Reason.*—A man is truly civilised only in so far as his Life is governed by clear and humane Thought, and leavened by its sacred influence. Your Religion is exalted by its intelligence, or degraded by its want of intelligence: in other words, the dignity of your religious Faith is proportionate to its intelligence. I would respectfully urge the Clergy of all denominations to make themselves familiar with these elemental truths,—to ponder them fearlessly and resolutely. They will find that Faith, like all strong things, must have a sound basis,

<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, pt. ii. c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters on History*, vol. ii. p. 220. See also Appendix, *infra*.

that there is no possible sound basis for Faith but that of Reason. What other sound basis for it could there possibly be! "My Soul by Reason's force convicted stood." The great sanctity of Intellect has yet to be recognised by theologians. When once they do recognise this great doctrine it will be as life to the dead. "If God interferes at all to procure the happiness of mankind, it must be on a far more comprehensive scale than by providing for them a church of which far the majority of them will never hear. It was on this line of thought, the details of which I need not pursue, that I passed out of the Catholic phase, but slowly and in many years, to that highest development where all religions appear in their historical light as efforts of the human spirit to come to an understanding with the Unseen Powers whose presence it feels."<sup>1</sup>

*All credulities and superstitions are rooted in the irrational.*—All the credulities and superstitions which have filled and desolated the minds and the lives of men, are the outcome of neglected Reason. All superstition is irrational and springs from the irrational. All superstition would necessarily die out if mankind were perfectly reasonable: that is

<sup>1</sup> Mark Pattison, *Memoirs*.

if they would make proof of all moral and religious propositions submitted to them before consenting to make a cultus of such propositions.

*High Life depends upon high Thought.*—If the majority never, or scarcely ever, have the advantage of hearing a philosophic thought propounded, how unlikely it is that they will ever lead a philosophic life! Intellectual vitality must lie at the root of all moral Reformation and Renovation. High life depends upon high thought. Without high thinking there cannot be high living. It is only as Mankind get leavened by noble thinking that we can reasonably look for the growth of noble character, which alone is Civilisation. As well expect a steam-engine to go without steam as a man to live nobly without the propulsion of noble thought. The most beneficent of all workers is he who sets up a current of fertilising Thought.

*The real atheists and infidels.*—Let it be religiously observed that the infidel or unfaithful man is not necessarily the Jew or the Turk or the Pagan of any particular race at all, but the man whose acts do not square with his own heart-beliefs. This man is the real atheist, the real infidel, by whatsoever name he may be known, or in whatever

latitude he dwell. They who are pressing this truth upon their fellow-men are rendering, or trying to render them, a most important service: so important that to transmute the Rocky Mountains into ridges and ranges of Diamond and Emerald, would be nothing in comparison. Help us everybody who can—Authors, Preachers, Schoolmasters, Journalists, Politicians, to spread this great truth far and wide; to deepen the conviction of it; to inspire general action in grand harmony with it: so may we have a glorious harvest of Divine Fruit; so may we help to bring on the Golden Age—and scarcely otherwise. I think we may safely dogmatise in this doctrine. Reason must inspire and govern our Faith; our Faith must be absolutely loyal to our Reason. Thus shall we grow rich with the Riches of Divinity.



## CHAPTER VI

### DUTY REJECTS THE IRRATIONAL

*It is our duty to reject what our Reason rejects.*—And as the Rational Consciousness is the only firm ground of Belief, Certainty and Faith, it becomes our actual duty to reject whatever our Reason rejects. When, for example, the Romanist, or the Anglican Ritualist, invites you to take leave of your honest, God-created senses and to accept his Dogma of Transubstantiation, for Heaven's sake and your own dignity, don't do it. Reject the dogma absolutely. Your own Reason,—your own vulgar but Divinely-created senses, are resolutely opposed to it and emphatically declare that it is a crazy fiction. It is your religious duty to reject such a dogma with utter scorn. It is your religious duty not to permit your brains to be concussed or hoccussed by any man or priest alive. Through the Sacred Optic of Common Sense, priests are clearly seen to be mere human beings like ourselves—sometimes, a great deal worse.

God gave us our brains, with Discourse of Reason, for noble and sacred purposes, I doubt not. It is one of our highest and most religious duties to keep them sacred and unsophisticated and unconcussed. In so far as you abdicate your Reason you abdicate your manhood and ally yourself with the Powers of Darkness. It is obvious Common Sense to work according to the requisitions of Nature; obvious duncery to work against those requisitions. Try, for instance, to live on Opium! It is to be wished that duncery and disregard of Natural Law and Fact in Theology and Psychology were as promptly punished or checked as they are in certain breaches of Physical Law. It would restore many a crazed brain to sense and sanity.

## CHAPTER VII

### WE MUST DOUBT EVERY UNCERTAIN PROPOSITION

*It is our duty to doubt every uncertain proposition.*—Obviously Thought must be free, or it ceases to be Thought (consequently the stultitude involved in speaking disrespectfully of "Free Thought"). Thus it is not only our duty to reject whatever our Reason rejects, but it is as clearly our duty to doubt—*i.e.* to keep an open mind upon, any proposition whose truth remains uncertain. It is doubly our religious duty to understand before we act. Consider the matter: (1) You either know a thing, or (2) you positively don't know it, or (3) you are uncertain about it. In the first case it is clearly your duty to act according to your knowledge, if it is a matter demanding action, to the best of your ability; in the second, to stand stock-still or refuse to act in that particular matter; in the third, to "gang warily" or inquiringly. Mark, it is not merely advisable to demean ourselves in

this manner, but it is our positive duty so to do. There can be no more successful shuffling about this than there can be over the convincing commandment—Thou shalt not steal. In all business matters, in all secular life, the proposition “knowledge before action” is unopposed. Any sane person would have a right to feel insulted if you conceived him to be capable of denying it. A man cannot be nobly strong on anything inferior to a personal conviction. Before committing ourselves to the acceptance of any secular Belief, and before permitting ourselves to embark in any secular business or course of action, it is not only advisable but it is our strict duty to make such inquiries as will give rational warranty to the Belief or to the proposed course of action. So must it be in all religious questions. Whenever the mind is unconvinced of the truth of any religious proposition, it is our undoubted privilege and strict duty to remain religiously in doubt regarding it until we can get rationally convinced that it is true. It is actually foolish or dishonest to accept it when you are uncertain or inadequately informed concerning it. The Law of Honesty amongst sane persons cannot in any case be rightfully deferred, set aside or transcended.

*The enlightened Soul demands the utmost freedom of honest thought and honest speech.—*

The enlightened soul, by its natural endowments and its great natural dignity, demands the utmost freedom of honest thought and honest speech consistent with the rights of others. I repeat that Thought must be free or it ceases to be Thought. He who does not seek this freedom and claim it as his right—much more he who denies it and condemns it—is still in spiritual slavery. Until he breaks away from this slavery, he can never be a noble Freeman and Son of God: which I take to be his true and glorious calling.

*The Moral Law: it is unthinkable that any man should be punished for being true to his senses.—*Under a perfect system of Moral Government (which we apprehend God's Government to be), it is inconceivable that any man should be punished for being true to his senses. His very glory must necessarily lie in being as true to them in their organic integrity as he can possibly be.<sup>1</sup> From these we derive all our First Principles, which, I hold, constitute our most Divine Communications, and give us the Stars and the Chart and the Compasses by which we are to pilot ourselves in the Grand Voyage of Life. In

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar of Philosophy*, chap. iii.

all cases it must be profoundly religious, in no case can it be irreligious, to listen to the high and holy Voice of Reason. The irreligious, the damnable, lies in being irrational, never in being rational. It is necessarily a healthy and virtuous frame of mind that refuses to give credence to the doubtful. I request all the Clergy of all denominations to meditate upon this proposition in dead earnest as if their very Salvation depended upon it.

Take a case. What should we say of a man who advised his friend to sign a business contract, the contents of which neither adviser nor advised understood, or of whose contents both parties were ignorant? It might not be polite to call such a one a blockhead, but it would not be amiss to give him the broadest of hints that he was a blockhead. If he was a lawyer the Law Society, I should suppose, would certainly have his name struck off the Rolls, whilst the man who followed his counsel would be regarded as a very poor simpleton. Yet—Horror of Horrors! This is the very trick that the Clergy have been playing upon the Laity these thousands of years past. “You must believe in something, *e.g.* The Trinity, whether you are convinced of its truth or not, whether you understand it or not, or be damned.”—“I don’t understand it

myself, but I will explain it to you." Something like this has been the peculiar wit of the Church through the Ages. The Laity should endeavour to put a stop to this kind of joking.

*One of the cleverest achievements of the Devil.*—It appears to me to be one of the cleverest and wickedest things the Devil has done—to have succeeded in attaching the character of iniquity to any honest Belief, or want of belief, whatever. When one sees, it may be, a decent, good, pietistic old gentleman, who would not knock you down and rob you for the whole world, quietly and obstinately maintaining that unless you "believe" something totally irrational, you are in a hopeless state of damnation, his case must be regarded as one of the grimmest triumphs of Devilry.

*The religious duty of all men.*—It is the religious duty of all men to gather their wits about them, and to think vigorously and conscientiously about everything—especially about everything spiritual—that concerns them. If they could only be induced to do this—if, for instance, they would only ask themselves soberly: "What evidence have we for believing that the Pope and his Cardinals are endowed with supernatural and Heavenly powers?" they could only answer, "None." If by flourishing his walking-stick the Pope could

call down a storm of thunder and lightning, or call up a cloud of locusts at will upon heretic lands, there would be some excuse for his claim of supernatural endowment. Until he can do something of this kind his supernatural pretensions must be regarded as quite unfounded and preposterous. But yet—Pope and Cardinals : these are they who accuse their most enlightened opponents of “invincible ignorance”!<sup>1</sup> If mankind at large could only be induced to gaze at such persons through the unsophisticated and sacred atmosphere of Common Sense, they would all, *quoad* their supernatural pretensions, disappear like visions, or dissolve into nothing with all the suddeny of Professor Pepper’s Ghost.

Let us then keep this maxim continually in mind—that it is our duty to maintain an inquiring disposition on any uncertain or unproved proposition whatsoever ; that in all such cases it is actually our duty to doubt ;

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson once said that there was nothing of which he would not undertake to persuade a Frenchman in a foreign country. “ I’ll carry him to St. Paul’s Cathedral and I’ll tell him ‘by our law you may walk half round the church, but if you walk round the whole, you will be punished capitally,’ and he will believe me at once” (*Journal of a Tour*, p. 412). This is exactly the position of the Romanist with respect to the Pope. For him, in such circumstances, to accuse anybody of “invincible ignorance” is foolish and presumptuous to the last degree.



that it is a positive sin to erect a dogma upon any uncertainty. "I loved Wisdom and sought her from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty."<sup>1</sup> May these doctrines of Common Sense drop as the rain ; may the speech of Common Sense distil as the dew ; as the small rain upon the tender herb and as the showers upon the grass.

<sup>1</sup> Wisdom of Solomon viii. 2.

## CHAPTER, VIII

### THE SUPERCONSCIOUS AND THE CONSCIOUS

*THE Superconscious and the Speculative are of no importance compared with the conscious and the practical.*—A clear distinction should be drawn between the Superconscious and the Speculative on the one hand, and the Conscious and the Practical on the other—the former being of no importance compared with the latter. A man, for instance, who knows almost nothing about the origin and relationships of the kings of his country may be a first-rate servant of the State. One might be a fine poet without being able to give a lucid exposition of any esthetical theory ; an able reasoner, without being able to expound the laws of Logic ; a great patriot, yet very defective in his knowledge of constitutional history and law. Above all, a man might be a great Christian and, at the same time, very little versed in superconscious and speculative Theology. Nobody will dispute such propositions.

*Some admirable Christians, not speculative theologians, and some speculative theologians, not admirable Christians.*—Indeed it may be that most of us have acquaintance with persons of this kind—shall I say this admirable kind? Noble practical Christians, but nowhere as speculative theologians; whilst, on the other hand, unhappily, we may have the pain of knowing eager, contentious and orthodox (so called) theologians who are, at the same moment, very middling or even very wicked practical Christians. Perhaps this is an experience more or less common to us all. History at all events—especially Church history, is crammed full of men who, whilst having been very eager, speculative theologians and dogmatists of the superconscious, were, at the same moment, very wicked Christians. This is indubitable. We might even say, I think, that though the World's superconscious and speculative Theology were to be settled next week—though a superconscious creed could be drawn up to-morrow, it would probably be of little practical importance to mankind at large except in so far as it might divert the vast floods of energy which are now wasted on a barren and blighting activity, into the driving of some more profitable mill. On the other hand, let the theologians universally adopt the

practical creed of Christianity—the practical creed of serving God and doing good to men : let them adopt this creed of intelligent consciousness and act upon it, and it must of necessity promote the welfare of the Human Race. If, Sunday after Sunday, our clergy would but strenuously preach the necessity, the greatness, the beauty, the majesty of individual moral effort instead of feebly, pointlessly maundering over superconscious, factitious, irrational and sometimes immoral dogmas, this fresh enterprise could scarcely distil otherwise than in dews of blessing.

*The conscious and the superconscious in relation to conduct.*—Examine this point further. Dr. Chalmers, for instance, following the Apostle Paul, tells us that “Repentance is the gift of God” :<sup>1</sup> a speculative and super-conscious dogma which is held by millions. Now to state this as a hard dogma, however true it might ultimately prove to be, is to lay down a doctrine of the truth of which, without a miracle, we can have no conscious assurance, no valid evidence, no heart-conviction ; whilst, supposing it to be true, it logically implies that a man has no say in his own life : a thought which would involve the sincere thinker in utter perplexity and distress. But,

<sup>1</sup> Hanna, *Life of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. i. p. 188.

on the other hand, if you intently listen, say, to the voice of John the Baptist thundering down through the centuries that great warning—"Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," you will perceive at once that it implies excellent doctrine, exactly suitable, perhaps, to your own case; that it carries the highest sanctions with it; that it forces itself upon the acceptance of your own judgment as sound counsel, making you feel that you must repent and constraining you to repent. Hereupon mark your position: you have now conscious assurance not only of the soundness of the advice, "Repent ye," but also of the verity of your own act of repentance—a conscious assurance full of authenticity and sacred strength.

How then shall the perplexing super-conscious, speculative dogma—"Repentance is the gift of God," compete in validity and worth with the practical doctrine, "you must repent"? The superconscious, speculative dogma takes no grip of our minds at all. Intelligence cannot digest it; our moral nature cannot derive any sustenance from it and utterly rejects it. But the practical doctrine when accepted is full of spiritual sustenance and nourishes us into a higher life. Herein

lies its excellence. No theological doctrine can be of any worth that does not carry spiritual nutrition into our lives and go to strengthen our spiritual fibre.

*The Mutineers against Nature and Common Sense can never enjoy a prolonged prosperity.*—

If you cannot attain a spiritual state of mind and virtuous affections—the grand end of Religion, through conscious truth, conscious conviction, conscious effort, how are you to attain it through transcendental speculations, of whose truth you have no special warranty, no personal consciousness?

How would a superconscious numerical dogma avail you in Arithmetic?

How would a superconscious dietarial dogma avail you with a hungry stomach?

How would a superconscious engineering dogma help you to throw a bridge across a river?

How is a superconscious theological dogma going to transport you to New Jerusalem?

“I desire no greater proof that an opinion must be false,” said Swift, “than to find very great absurdities annexed to it.”<sup>1</sup> The mutineers against Nature and Common Sense can never enjoy a prolonged prosperity.

<sup>1</sup> *The Sentiments of a Church of England Man; Works* vol. iii. p. 132.

No one better knew the soundness of this principle than Dr. Chalmers himself when dealing with secular questions. Panegyrising Newton for his discoveries, he writes: "*The strength of his philosophy lay as much in refusing admittance to that which wanted evidence, as in giving a place and occupancy to that which possessed it. In that march of intellect which led him onward through the rich and magnificent field of his discoveries, he pondered every step; and while he advanced with a firm and assured movement wherever the light of evidence carried him, he never suffered any glare of imagination or prejudice to seduce him from his path. Had he been like the majority of men, he would have broken free from the fetters of a sober and chastened understanding; and giving wings to his imagination, had done what philosophers have done after him—been carried away by some meteor of his own forming, or found his amusement in some of his own intellectual pictures, or palmed some loose and confident plausibilities of his own upon the world. But Newton stood true to his principle, that he would take up nothing which wanted evidence, and he kept by his demonstrations, his measurements and his proofs.*"<sup>1</sup> Would

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Revelation and Modern Astronomy*, pp. 46-47.

that he had carried these principles into his theological studies, and that every living good man would religiously do the same thing. We want,—we demand, “demonstrations, measurements and proofs” in Theology no less urgently than we demand them in physical and secular science. When, from the nature of the case, “demonstrations, measurements and proofs” are not to be had, decency requires us to refrain diligently from inventing and fabricating dogmas.

*Necessity of possessing personal knowledge of our chief interests.*—Every person should aspire to possess a direct and first-hand knowledge of the leading facts and principles and needs of his own rational existence. If, for instance, I knew all the medical theories and opinions which have been held by the medical profession from Esculapius downward, and yet had no first-hand knowledge of the human body and its needs, any medical student who had honestly studied for a month in the hospitals would be a better physician than I. Similarly, of course, in every branch of knowledge from Theology down to Bricks. The man with a direct knowledge of things, however limited, is a man of learning compared with him who only possesses a knowledge of the opinions of others, however encyclopaedic



and universal his knowledge of opinions may be. It is one of the great curses of "learning," that it concerns itself so much with mere opinions and divorces itself so largely from life and things. "He only who is able to stand alone is qualified for Society, and that I understand to be the end for which a soul exists in this world—to be himself the counter-balance of all falsehood and wrong." Let us understand that "Divine sentiments which are always soliciting us, are breathed into us from on High, and are an offset to a universe of suffering and crime; that self-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is from God."<sup>1</sup>

*Knowledge and Philosophy are not Eleatic, nor Ionic, nor Cyrenaic, nor Socratic, nor Platonic, nor Aristotelic, but Human and Personal.*—In Theology as in every other science, let us never be so foolish as to give an actual well-conditioned bird-in-the-hand for any Phoenix-Feather, or tuft of feathers, in Cloudland. Let it be for ever remembered that no mere report or assertion of any kind, though linked with the highest names, can carry as much credibility with it as our own actual experience or conviction. *To your own body*, your own dinner must be of infinitely more importance than the dinners of all other

<sup>1</sup> Emerson, *Miscellanies; Works*, vol. xi. pp. 221-2.

persons put together ; *to your own spirit*, your own actual knowledge of things must be of infinitely more importance than all the speculations and opinions of all other persons put together. Knowledge and Philosophy are not Eleatic, nor Ionic, nor Cyrenaic, nor Socratic, nor Platonic, nor Aristotelic, but Human and Personal. Never let anybody's opinion of anything be more to you than a guide to your own consideration of the facts and principles revealed to your own observation. In all possible cases, that of which you are conscious and personally assured must enjoy an authority altogether superior to that of mere hearsay ; or to that which is opposed to, or above, Consciousness.

*In psychological questions we quote other persons not as authorities but as auxiliaries.*— Thus no man who knows his business will ever quote another person (however eminent he may be) on any psychological question as a Court of Appeal and Final Authority, but only as an auxiliary in his own service. I don't quote Aristotle, for instance (on such a question), because I agree with Aristotle, but I quote him because he agrees with me : that is, I simply summon him as an excellent witness of the elemental truths for which I may be contending. Better still, I have

frequent occasion to summon my adversaries as witnesses against themselves, and as unwilling but implicit and irrefutable witnesses of the same elemental truths. In all such matters a man who knows his business must necessarily be his own pope.

*Consciousness is, in all cases, our Divinest Authority.*—Let it never be forgotten that in the last resort the intelligent Consciousness is, in all matters, our highest Authority,—our Divinest Authority,—our only Authority. Thus Ruskin: "The Soul of Man is still a mirror wherein may be seen darkly, the image of the Mind of God. No other book, nor fragment of book, than that, will you ever find; no velvet-bound missal, nor frank-incensed manuscript; nothing hieroglyphic nor cuneiform; papyrus and pyramid are alike silent in this matter; nothing in the clouds above nor in the earth beneath. That flesh-bound volume is the only revelation that is, that was, or that can be. In that is the image of God painted; in that is the Law of God written; in that is the promise of God revealed. Know thyself, for through thyself only canst thou know God." Man is "the most wonderful piece of God's workmanship extant. In the best piece not only he is bound to take delight, but cannot in a right

state of thought take delight in anything else *otherwise than through himself.*"<sup>1</sup> The Voice of Consciousness is to us the highest rendering of the Voice of God. The Text of all Texts is the Text written within the Soul of Man. Let us pay devout attention to this great Text. It may well be taken to supersede all other Texts, however sacrosanct. The Law written on Tablets of Stone is of trifling importance compared with that written upon the Tablets of the Heart. If you cannot rely upon a conscious basis of truth and fact in any matter of great concernment, how can you possibly rely upon any basis of super-conscious assumption! It was written of old—"They shall be greatly ashamed who trust in graven images." They shall be no less ashamed who try to mock the Divine Voice of Reason. All the assertions which have been made from first to last by all the theologians concerning Adam, or Abraham, or Melchisedek, are of the most trifling importance compared with the intellectual and moral convictions which may be found stamped in any sane Human Consciousness. Every deep speaker of truth might truly say—"The Word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." Let it be understood, then,

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pp. 222-5 (ed. 1897).

that Intelligence is not only the final Authority for the truth or falsehood of any proposition, but the holiest Authority. Let it be clearly apprehended that Intelligence is not only consistent with, but demands the profoundest and purest spirituality of Life.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FINITE NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND

*THE Finite Nature of the Human Mind must be kept in view.*—My next proposition is that in every inquiry into ultimate questions, it is necessary to remember the limitation of our faculties—

“We that are not all,

As parts, can see but parts, now this, now that.”

As I have already tried to set forth in my *Grammar of Philosophy*, the Human Mind being finite, the whole Universe of Mind and Matter must stand to it in one or other of four relationships: (1) As Known, or (2) As Knowable, or (3) As Unknowable through inaccessibility of evidence, or (4) As actually Unknowable or Mysterious.<sup>1</sup> Let us briefly recount these important distinctions.

(1) *There is the Known*: for instance, the Moral Law, The Multiplication Table; The British Constitution; Baking, Brewing, Hat-

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar of Philosophy*, chap. v.

ting, Bootmaking, and no end of important industries.

(2) *There is the Knowable*—or things which may be brought to light, or about which we may obtain further information : for instance, the nature of Heat, or Electricity, or a thousand-and-one other things.

(3) *There is the Unknowable through inaccessibility of data or evidence* : that which we are not able to bring within the purview of the Rational Consciousness. Under this head might be suggested such questions as these—In what part of the body does the Soul reside? In the Pineal Gland? Or “in the cellulae of the occipital parts of the cerebellum”? or where else? Again, Did the Egg or the Hen come first? If the Egg, where did it come from? How was it hatched? If the Hen, where was she brought from? How was she hatched? Millions of similar questions might be asked—such questions as thousands of philosophers have been growing bald over, and vainly racking their heads to answer since the world began, to the dislocation of their rational faculties, and to their detriment as men and citizens. There are no means of ascertaining what kind of pippin it was that Adam ate, nor the kind of spade with which he delved; no means, say, of recovering Noah’s

Log-Book. Our Darwinian friends especially, should note these grave facts. They are unconsciously but pervicaciously striving to make garments without cloth. They should betake themselves in a body to a more promising industry.

(4) *There is the actually Unknowable or Mysterious*—that which the Human Mind is under disability to know, through the limitation of its own faculties: for instance, how matter came into existence? How a metaphysical beginning is possible? and so forth. You can crack an egg quite easily; but if you were Solomon himself you could not crack the whole secret of it. This is the region of Mystery—Inscrutability.

*It is a mark of excellent understanding to know when to stop thinking.*—Now with regard to all questions arising under the third and fourth divisions just set forth, men need not try to cogitate otherwise than negatively. They who attempt to travel in those regions can only return fagged, foiled and foolish—even when they bring back lying reports. Considerable wisdom can be shown, and much economy of power can be effected, in refusing to make even an attempt to travel in those regions. Men's minds being finite, they can no more deal with infinite problems, or with



problems in which data and evidence are inaccessible, than they can carry their present bodies to the Dog-star. This indeed is to understate the difficulty; for whereas a very little progress can be made towards the Dog-star (by climbing up a ladder, for example, or going up in a balloon) no progress at all can be made by the Human Mind towards the solution of any Infinite Problem. Consider, for instance, the *punctum stans* or the *Eternal Now* of the Schoolmen and their foolish followers. With fine scorn Montaigne wrote—"Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet gods by dozens."<sup>1</sup> It is a mark of fine understanding to know when to stop thinking.

*Secrets of Nature.*—Nature has many secrets which she keeps and, I anticipate, will continue to keep, as tightly as an Egyptian mummy keeps its secrets. The quicker our theologians and speculators recognise this great fact, the better will it be for Theology and Philosophy, and consequently for our human welfare in general. The common failure of Mankind in practice to observe the insurmountable obstacles which meet them

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 273. In Art, Ruskin, I think erroneously, speaks of indistinctness as mystery (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. p. 61).

at the threshold of such inquiries—the almost general failure of the Human Mind to observe its own limitations, has already choked the Libraries of the World with heavy, deleterious and deadly volumes, and cursed the Human Race to the very marrow of its bones. The inner secrets of the Lord of the Universe are not to be unravelled even by the boldest seekers. The student who unites prudence to boldness will not try to inquire into them. He knows when he has struck the Nether Adamant. The only fruitful provinces of human learning are the provinces of *the Known* and *the Knowable*, as above indicated.

*Theologians should have nothing to do with the Inaccessible and the Mysterious.*—Our present business is with Theology. From the considerations stated, let theologians frankly recognise at once that they have no business, no rational occupation, within the vast regions of Inaccessibility and Mystery—(3) and (4). Touching all questions relating thereto, their wisdom will be found in a modest confession of ignorance. Since the Fallen Angels discussed

“Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,  
Fix'd Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost,”

it appears that the sublunary Human Mind

has conquered no part of those realms ; and as long at least as it remains sublunary, we may safely prophesy that it will conquer no part of them.

It is quite useless, obviously, to speak of such entities as, say, the "Logos" or the "Holy Ghost." Indubitably we have no data to go upon in trying to investigate and expound such supposed entities and their functions. Frankly, nobody knows anything about them ; consequently an impressive call is made upon every rational Soul to leave such subjects severely alone ; and we are at the same time forced to conclude that all who pretend to know about, and dare to formulate dogmas concerning them, are at best self-deceived and ignorant persons *quoad* those subjects. Indeed they were not surpassed in folly by those who in the Middle Ages inquired "whether the Spirits of Pyromancie or Geomancie did most predominate in magic."

Some wise men have come to this conclusion. The 139th Psalm is largely a magnificent and awestruck expression of the weakness of the human faculties contrasted with the Infinite Knowledge, Power and Majesty of God. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon

me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The same truth is expressed in Ecclesiastes, "When I applied mine heart to wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth . . . then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun : because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it ; yea further ; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it " (viii. 16-17). "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all " (xi. 5). So in Job—"I would seek unto God . . . which doeth great things and unsearchable ; marvellous things without number " (v. 8-9). Socrates did not think that those acted dutifully to the Gods who inquired into the things which they did not wish to make known.<sup>1</sup> Sophocles wrote :

" Man's highest blessedness  
In wisdom chiefly stands ;  
And in the things which touch upon the Gods,  
'Tis best in word and deed  
To shun unholy pride." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Memorabilia*, iv. 7. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Antigone*, 1340-50 (Plumptre). Concerning certain difficult subjects, Ruskin happily speaks of being brought "into a wholesome state of not knowing what to think " (*Modern Painters*, vol. v., note, p. 299).

*All Science proceeds upon the Given.*— Science itself finds itself powerless in front of Infinitude. All those who have tried to break into it or under it, have but broken their pickaxes all to no purpose, on the Nether Adamant. Human Science in every department must be contented to proceed upon the basis of something Given and unquestionable. God is never going to enter into Judgment against us concerning *things we don't know*. I think we may be dogmatic upon this point. A strenuous Intellect is required to conduct any enterprise properly, but a no less sound and strenuous Intellect is required to enable a man to refrain, and to know when to refrain, from vain inquiries. Secular and Sacred inquirers alike have the utmost need to mark this caution.

The theologian therefore will do well to recognise the limitations of his faculties and powers ; to realise once for all that his positive Theology should be confined to the fruitful fields of the Known and the Knowable. He should at all times be on his guard against losing himself and his followers in the blind Regions of Speculation and Mystery. Above all, he should devoutly recognise how inconceivable it is that the Divine Being should hold any of his creatures guilty for rejecting

dogmas and doctrines which are incomprehensible and immoral. This one little consideration should, even by itself, be amply sufficient to modify and, to a great extent, destroy all the orthodox creeds and theologies which now cumber and pester the world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GRANDEUR OF THE HUMAN SOUL

*The potential grandeur of the Human Soul should be remembered.*—But whilst for ever bearing in mind the finite character of our faculties, it is no less necessary that we should never forget the inherent potentialities of worth belonging to the Human Soul. Some great men have excellently discoursed on this subject. “Man was made in the Image of God,” says that immortal work the Book of Genesis. “Thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God,” says Eliphaz the Temanite. “The grave and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied,” moralises that grand Compendium of Wisdom, the Book of Proverbs. “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing,” says the Preacher.<sup>1</sup> Listen to Socrates discoursing

<sup>1</sup> The same wise man's words—“All the labour of man is for his mouth, yet the appetite is not filled,” is a saw that only applies to a man in his state of animal ignorance and indifference. It corresponds with Plato's saying—“The mass of

on Duty: "Wherever any one has posted himself, either thinking it to be better, or has been posted by his chief, there, as it appears to me, he ought to remain and meet danger, taking no account either of death or anything else in comparison with disgrace. . . . To act unjustly and to disobey my superior, whether God or Man, I know is evil and base. I shall never therefore fear or shun things which, for aught I know, may be good, before evils which I know to be evils. O Athenians, I love and honour you; but I shall obey God rather than you; and as long as I breathe and am able, I shall not cease studying philosophy, and exhorting and warning any of you I meet, saying, as I have been accustomed to do, 'Are you not ashamed of being careful for riches, how you may be able to acquire them in the greatest abundance, and for glory and honour, but care not nor take any thought for wisdom and truth, and for your soul how it may be made more perfect?' . . . And I think that no greater good has ever befallen you in the city than my zeal for the service of the God. For I go about doing nothing else than persuading you, both young and old,

men desire without measure; and when they have it in their power to obtain a moderate gain, they prefer to have a gain that never satisfies" (*The Laws*, xi. 4).



to take no care either for the body or for riches, prior to or so much as for the soul, how it may be made most perfect, telling you that virtue does not spring from riches, but riches and all other human blessings, both public and private, from virtue. . . . Therefore I must say, O Athenians, either yield to Anytus or do not, since I shall not act otherwise, even though I must die many deaths.”<sup>1</sup> A representative of the Bramo Somaj in London, in 1875, chose as his text on one occasion certain Sanscrit words which he translated thus—“In the golden recess of man’s Soul, dwelleth the immaculate Spirit of the Supreme God.”<sup>2</sup> The greatest of all Masters asks—“What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” No profit at all, of course, but infinite loss; therefore the Human Soul is of more value than all the world. “Behold now we are the sons of God,” says the seraphic Apostle, “and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall

<sup>1</sup> *The Apology of Socrates*, 17. Such was the man whom the Athenian rabble condemned to death; and the Mediaeval Church, to eternal perdition!

<sup>2</sup> C. Maurice Davies: *Unorthodox London*, p. 196 (Series ii.) Bramoism “is very much the same kind of revulsion against Brahminism as Protestantism is against Romanism” (*ib.* p. 193).

appear we shall be like him . . . and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Sir David Lyndsay finely wrote :

"My son, the suth gif thou wald knaw,  
The veritie I sall thee schaw ;  
There is nane worldly thyng at all  
May satysfie ane mannis saull ;  
For it is so insaciabyll,  
That Hevin and Erth may nocht be abyll  
One Saull allone to mak-content  
Tyll it see God Omnipotent."<sup>1</sup>

Milton makes even Belial ask :

"Who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,  
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost  
In the wide womb of uncreated Night?"<sup>2</sup>

In his mocking spirit Montaigne writes—bearing testimony to a grander truth than he apprehended: "The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and yet withal the proudest: he sees and feels himself lodged here in the dirt and nastiness of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst, the most stagnated and most corrupted part of the universe, in the lowest storey of it, and the farthest from the Arch of Heaven; on the

<sup>1</sup> *Ane Dialog betwixt Experience and Ane Courteour; Works*, vol. iii. pp. 124-5. It is frightful to think that an author of this worth is practically forgotten amongst us.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradise Lost*, bk. ii.

same Floor with animals of the worst condition of the three species ; *yet in his Imagination he soars above the Orb of the Moon and casts the Sky under his feet.*"<sup>1</sup> Hobbes wrote : "Nor can a man any more live whose desires are at an end than he whose sense and imagination are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire from one object to another. . . . The object of man's desire is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time, but to assure for ever the way of his future desire."<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Overbury finely describes a true man as "One whose bounty is limited by reason, not ostentation ; and to make it last he deals it discreetly, as we sow the furrow not by the sack but by the handful. His mind is so secure that thunder rocks him asleep which breaks other men's slumbers. Whether his time call him to live or die, he can do both nobly ; if to fall, his descent is breast to breast with virtue ; and even then, like the Sun near his set, he shows unto the world his clearest countenance."<sup>3</sup> He tells us that "the Empire of Germanie is not more great than over a man's self."<sup>4</sup> "Man is but

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, bk. ii. c. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *English Works*, vol. iii. p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Characters ; Works*, pp. 115-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Newes from Any Whence*, *ib.* p. 186.

a reed, the very frailest in Nature," says Pascal, "but he is a reed that thinks. It needs not that the whole Universe should arm to crush him. He dies from an exhalation, from a drop of water. But should the Universe conspire to crush him, man would still be nobler than that by which he falls; for he knows that he dies; and of the victory which the Universe has over him, the Universe knows nothing."<sup>1</sup> The moral element, said Goethe, "is no product of human reflection, but a beautiful nature inherent and inborn. It is more or less inherent in mankind generally, but to a high degree in a few eminently gifted minds. These have by great deeds or doctrines manifested their divine nature, which then, by the beauty of its appearance, won the love of men, and powerfully attracted them to reverence and emulation."<sup>2</sup> He tells us that "the man of firm decision the Universe fashions."<sup>3</sup> He is the Godlike :

"Man and man only  
Can do the impossible,  
He 'tis distinguisheth,  
Chooseth and judgeth,  
He to the moment  
Endurance can lend.

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<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion*, i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Conversations with Eckermann*, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> *Hermann and Dorothea; Poems*, p. 383.

"He and he only  
The good can reward,  
The bad can he punish,  
Can heal and can save ;  
All that wanders and strays  
Can usefully blend.

"And we pay homage  
To the Immortals  
As though they were men,  
And did in the great  
What the best, in the small,  
Does or might do.

"Be the man that is noble  
Both helpful and good,  
Unweariedly forming  
The right and the useful ;  
A type of those Beings  
Our mind hath foreshadowed."<sup>1</sup>

Emerson takes an equally high view of human potentiality. "All things are known to the Soul. It is not to be surprised by any communication. Nothing can be greater than it. Let those fear and those fawn who will. The Soul is in her native realm . . . wide as hope, rich as love. Pusillanimity and fear she refuses with a beautiful scorn ; they are not for her who puts on her coronation robes, and goes out through universal love to universal power."<sup>2</sup> "Every man should be open to ecstasy or a divine illumination, and his daily

<sup>1</sup> *Poems*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> *The Method of Nature ; Works*, vol. i. p. 213.

walk elevated by intercourse with the spiritual world.”<sup>1</sup> “Whoever has had experience of the moral sentiment, cannot choose but believe in unlimited power. Each pulse from that heart is an oath from the Most High.”<sup>2</sup> It is only ignorant people who “confound reverence for the intuitions with egotism.”<sup>3</sup> Speaking of Scipio he finely remarks that when charged with peculation, he “refuses to do himself so great a disgrace as to wait for justification though he has the scroll of his accounts in his hands, but tears it to pieces before the tribunes.”<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, too, is ever great on the subject. “In all situations out of the Pit of Tophet, wherein a living man has stood or can stand, there is actually a prize of quite infinite value placed within his reach, namely, a Duty for him to do. . . . Such knowledge of the transcendental, immeasurable character of Duty, we call the basis of all Gospels, the essence of Religion; he who with his whole soul knows not this, as yet knows nothing, as yet is properly nothing.”<sup>5</sup> “A murmur of Eternity and Immensity, of Death and of Life,” steals through our souls, says the same great

<sup>1</sup> *Man the Reformer; Works*, vol. i. p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Conduct of Life; Works*, vol. vi. p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Social Aims; Works*, vol. viii. p. 325.

<sup>4</sup> *Essays; Works*, vol. ii. p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. iii. pp. 110-111.

Philosopher of Clothes; and such testimonies from illustrious writers, touching the grandeur of the Soul, might be endlessly multiplied.

*But the Commonalty of authors and men are very dull on this great subject.*—But the common run of authors and men are very dull on this grand subject. They are sadly lacking “in true reverence for Human Intelligence, for Human Worth and Wisdom.”<sup>1</sup> As the Sun and the Moon and the Stars on high have failed to draw forth their wonder and admiration, so the moral and divine faculties with which they have been endowed have failed to arouse in them a proper self-esteem.

*Many of them regard their immortal faculties as if they were of less consequence than their boots.*—In practice, at all events, the common run of men and women treat their Immortal Souls, together with their Immortal Faculties, as if they were of no more consequence than their boots. Shall we be guilty of libel, or misstatement, or exaggeration if we say that a large number of them do actually pay less regard to their Immortal Souls than to their boots?—that leather positively figures more largely in their minds than their own Divine Essence? So dull and undiscerning is the neglected Human Head. It is fearful to

<sup>1</sup> *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 106.

think how Mankind suffers from neglected Heads. As Sir Kenelm Digby said—The fountain “of all the calamities and mischiefs in all the world, consisteth of the troubled, bitter waters of ignorance, folly and rashness, to cure which the only remedy and antidote is the salt of true learning.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, here are millions of Human Beings all ignorant of their glorious potentialities. What means have we of apprising them of the fact? I wish the clergy would manfully step in and help us. To be great is the proper mission of every Human Soul.

*Disasters resulting from neglected Heads.*—If a man will not be true to the central, self-evident and indubitable intuitions of his intellectual being, he puts out his own right eye and condemns himself to stagger through the world in darkness. I venture to tell you that the Laws and Statutes and Judgments of Moses are not so sacred as those of Common Sense; and indeed that it is from the latter that the former derive whatever measure of sanctity they possess: concerning which Laws and Statutes and Judgments of Common Sense we may use the words of Moses—“The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers (only) but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” Nay, I think we may

<sup>1</sup> *Observations upon Religio Medici*, p. 140.



actually venture to say that we shall all perish in so far as we are disobedient to, and rebellious against, those Sacred Laws. "If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him *if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul*"; which can only be by the methods of Common Sense. The promise, too, is addressed to the Individual. Never lose sight of the importance of the individual. Frederick the Great, for instance, like so many other people, omitted to observe, or forgot, this great fact and sought to *rule the intelligence* of his subordinates; but he "came to know with sorrow that those who had shaken off their prejudices at his command remained in bondage to *him*," and consequently became destitute of ability for self-government.<sup>1</sup>

*The Static powers of Duncery.*—Notice that if Hercules himself be a stupid person, he is of no good account in the world—will, in fact, only do damage to it. The stupid person plays about the most frightful part in human history. He is perhaps the most powerful of Satan's Auxiliary Forces. In any case the static endurance of Duncery is immense, and calls for all the resources of knowledge and wisdom to deal with it.

*Philosophers sometimes make the same mis-*

<sup>1</sup> Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 304.

*take as dull persons.*—It is a melancholy fact, also, that whole tribes even of philosophers make the same deadly mistake as ordinary dull persons: they fail to recognise the glorious potentialities of the Human Soul. Not only so; there are many of them who, instead of making it their pride and glory to think with Dante of “Souls of mighty worth,” are engaged in the ghastly attempt to make out that there are no souls at all,—that a man is no other than his body,—that he is matter merely and not spirit,—that the central fact of his existence is the Great Gut! Some hold that he is no higher than the son of a monkey; others, that he is the descendant of a primeval fish; others, that he is a mere machine. Having abolished Almighty God to their satisfaction, it is but natural and consistent that they should seek to abolish all the Divinity in Man. But it is an evil thing for Society. With such notions touching God and the Human soul current among us—taught frequently, indeed, from the Professor’s Chair, there need be little wonder that in everyday life it is often less regarded than boots and blacking. Those materialising sages seem to incur a fearful responsibility in offering their death-dealing garbage to hungry young souls. I wish they were wiser.

*If Man be a monkey, he is the most wonderful of all monkeys.*—If a man is to be regarded as a machine, he is plainly a *personal* machine of a most amazing kind. If he is to be regarded as the son of a monkey, he is plainly (in potentiality) a monkey of noble faculties, capacities and desires, one who can speculate on atoms and embrace the Pleiades in his thoughts; who can study insects and obtain a glimmer of Angels; who can moralise on death and burial, and yet hope for immortality: a monkey whom mere nuts cannot satisfy; for whom the world is a cage too small; a kind of Infinite Monkey, who might say with Mephistopheles, yet in no Mephistophelian sense:

“I own,

Though not omniscient, much to me is known.”<sup>1</sup>

*Materialists seem to be suffering from moral strabismus.*—I am totally opposed to the materialists and animalists. It is absurd and fearful that they should teach doctrines so wormishly mean when they might plainly see that men possess some potentiality, at least, of being angelically and divinely great. They seem to be suffering from moral strabismus. It were to be wished that some feat of strabotomy could be performed to correct their moral

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*, 1230-1.

vision. To me it seems that the proceedings of one right man are of more inherent worth than the movements of a whole Universe of unspiritual essences.

*The theologians also seem to be very short-sighted.*—Nor are the theologians, from the Apostle Paul downwards, blameless in this matter. Nay, they are very much to blame. They have not generally perceived how deeply and broadly and sacredly God has founded Human Nature. This is sometimes the very head and front of their offending. They are constantly accusing Human Nature of inadequacy of endowment, whereas if they would only be good enough to clear up their minds on the subject, they might be able to get convinced of its divinely appointed adequacy, to apprehend its full relationship and duty both towards God and men. They are here asked to observe that the Human Mind is indeed sacredly endowed ; that it is not the profane and purblind and unhallowed creation which they all too commonly take it to be. They are asked to notice that in taking the orthodox, low and false view of it, they are implicitly guilty of libelling and dishonouring God as well as Man ; and of thereby rendering their labours more or less futile ; and it is here suggested that by taking what is sub-

mitted to be the true and high view of our endowments and potentialities, and working in accordance with that view, they would probably find themselves in the way of arriving at great moral results.

*The Human Mind is noble even in its knowledge of its ignorance.*—Even in its ignorance the Human Mind shows evidence of its greatness. We *know*, for instance, that we cannot comprehend the Infinite. This fact alone speaks of the greatness of the Human Mind—this fact that it knows its own ignorance and limitations; that it is in a position to cultivate a wise agnosticism regarding the Infinite, and to stand in awe before the might and majesty of Deity.

Indeed it is positively great in its smallness. Take the question of empty space. “Verily there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen” (Job xxviii. 7). Let the mind conceive a line stretched out into all the millions and billions and trillions of miles (a good round number) which it may express in numerical notation upon a slate, yet the same mind knows that in some respects it is quite a short line; that beyond the end of it there remains immeasurable space; that it can carry itself in thought away into that im-

measurable space ; knowing that it is immeasurable ; knowing that no stop can be put, no limit fixed, to the flight of human Thought. Or take St. Augustine's notion of space—a sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere—here again we have finite knowledge with a clear recognition of the Unknown and Incomprehensible Infinite which we may strive to encompass in our thoughts, but which still eludes and baffles us continually.

So is it with number ; so with Duration. Our minds, though they cannot comprehend Eternity, know that they cannot comprehend it, and know at the same time that they cannot be filled or satisfied with secular aeons. Add Ages to Ages as far as figures can carry us, and still we know that there was an Eternity before these Ages began, and that there will be an Eternity after they are finished : an Eternity, moreover, in which we are profoundly interested. Thus the Human Mind is great not only in its actual and positive knowledge, but also in its knowledge of its own limitations and ignorance.

*Man is greater than the Planet he treads on.*—It should be understood, then, that without attempting to define or describe its substance, the Human Soul is a wonderful Entity.

Standing on this Planet, man in his thoughts is great enough to roam through the Astral Regions. The true man must always be greater than the world he treads on, or even the Suns and Systems which revolve round about him, inasmuch as he (not the world or the surrounding Suns and Systems) is probably made, according to the old writer, in the Image of God. Man is so great potentially that he may say, "I will rather die in a noble cause than prosper in a base one"; he can refuse to surrender even to the combined Powers of Darkness, and quietly consent to death in defence or assertion of his integrity : so that a very majestic person may live and move and have his temporary being under a very plain suit of clothes. Yes, this small biped may do beautiful and divine things. Richard Cameron calmly entering the battlefield against hopeless odds, with the prayer on his lips, "Lord spare the green and take the ripe," seems to be intrinsically a more sublime object in himself than the whole Universe of Material things. Of course this is not orthodoxy, which holds that a man, any man, is "naturally" vile, worthless, hopeless, helpless, "dead in Adam" and so forth ; and proceeds pietistically to have him browbeaten into the acceptance of a State of Celestial

Pauperism. No, clearly our doctrine is not orthodox, as orthodoxy is commonly understood; but it is the healthful and hopeful Gospel of the possibility of Human greatness; the inspiring Gospel of the possibility of individual worth; and, I would suggest, the highest rendering of the Gospel of Christ. Under its inspiration we may indeed become Sons of God; but not, I apprehend, under any other kind of inspiration.

A great poet has said :

“Man dreams what he is and wakes  
Only when upon him breaks  
Death’s mysterious morning beam.”<sup>1</sup>

In most cases, probably, this is true; but clearly it is folly to defer realising our high nature until overtaken by death. It must be wisdom to realise the fact in this life. “If your plan is just and a bit of Nature’s plan, persist in it like a Law of Nature.”<sup>2</sup> In all our discussions, then, let it be remembered that our Spiritual nature is potentially very great. Always bear in mind and try to live up to the doctrine that the weight of the Planet is probably of less consequence than the integrity of a Human Soul.

*Conclusion.*—As a preliminary, then, to the

<sup>1</sup> Calderon, *Life is a Dream*, ii. 18 (MacCarthy’s trans.).

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 340.



successful discussion of any religious doctrine, these axioms must be accepted :

- I. That the Rational Consciousness is the only possible standard of knowledge.
  - II. That the Rational Consciousness is the only valid authority in Religion.
  - III. That in all cases the Supernatural must be tested by the Natural.
  - IV. That all Scripture must be tested by Reason.
  - V. That the Rational Consciousness is the only firm ground of Belief, Certainty and Faith.
  - VI. That it is our duty to reject everything that Reason rejects.
  - VII. That it is our duty to doubt every uncertain proposition.
  - VIII. That the superconscious and the speculative are of no importance compared with the conscious and the practical.
  - IX. That the Human Mind is finite and should refrain from impossible tasks.
  - X. But is, at the same time, endowed with majestic potentialities.
- All creeds and systems of Theology should

be rigorously revised and corrected and, if need be, abolished, in so far as they are hostile to these axioms, deriving their authority, as we have seen, from the Rational Consciousness, the Living Oracle. The discovery of New Continents would be of small importance as compared with the propagation of the knowledge of these Truths. All clergymen especially should attend to them. Their grand object should be to awaken the people to a living sense of their Spiritual needs, and to a clear comprehension and realisation of their Spiritual Potentialities and of the splendour of their Calling.

## APPENDIX

### SOME SERIOUS DOCUMENTS

"Let my heart be sound in thy Statutes ; that I be not ashamed."—PS. cxix. 80.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 23-24.

"HE that believes without having any good reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies, but neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due to his Maker ; who would make him use those discerning faculties He has given him, to keep him out of mistake and error. He that does not this to the best of his power, however he sometimes lights on the truth, is in the right but by chance ; and I know not whether the luckiness of the accident will excuse the irregularity of the proceeding. This, however, is certain, that he must be accountable for every mistake he runs into ; whereas he that makes right use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth by these helps and

abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature, that though he should miss the truth, he would not miss the reward of it. For he governs his assent aright, and places it as he should, who in any case or matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves according as Reason directs him. He that does otherwise transgresses against his own light, and misuses those faculties which were given to him for no other end but to search and follow the clearer evidence and greater probability.

"I find that every sect as far as Reason will help them, make use of it gladly" (that is, in Landor's phrase, "They desire the fish but fear the water"), "and when it fails them, then they cry out, 'Tis matter of Faith and above Reason,' and I do not see how they can argue with any one, or even convince a gainsayer who makes use of the same plea, without setting down strict boundaries between Faith and Reason, which ought to be the first point established in all questions where Faith has anything to do. . . .

"Whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certainer to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional Revelation. For the knowledge we have that the Revelation came first from God, can never be so sure as the knowledge that we have from the clear and

distinct perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas, *v.g.* if it were revealed some ages since. That the three angles of a triangle were equal to two right angles, I might assent to the truth of that proposition upon the credit of the tradition that it was revealed. *But it would never amount to so great a certainty as the knowledge of it upon the comparing and measuring of my own ideas of two right angles and the three angles of a triangle.* The like holds in matter of fact knowable by our senses, *v.g.*, the history of the deluge conveyed to us by writings which had their original from Revelation; and yet nobody, I think, will say that he has as certain and clear a knowledge of the Flood as Noah who saw it, or that he himself would have had, had he been alive and seen it. *For he has no greater assurance than that of his senses that it is writ in the Book supposed writ by Moses inspired; but he has not such an assurance that Moses writ that Book as if he had seen Moses write it, so that the assurance of its being a Revelation is still less than the assurance of his senses.*" Concerning which contention we must say that it is invincible.

In Revelation, "Our assurance can be no greater than our knowledge is that it is a Revelation from God. Nothing, I think, can undo that title, shake or overrule plain knowledge, or rationally prevail with any man to

admit it for true in a direct contradiction to the clear evidence of his own understanding. For since no evidence of our faculties by which we receive such Revelations can exceed, if equal, the certainty of our intuitive knowledge, we can never receive for a truth anything that is directly contrary to our clear and distinct knowledge. Because this would be to subvert the principles and foundations of all knowledge, evidence and assent whatsoever; and there would be no difference between truth and falsehood; no measure of credible and incredible in the world, if doubtful propositions shall take place before self-evident, and what we certainly know give way to what we may possibly be mistaken in. In propositions, therefore, contrary to the clear perceptions of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, it will be in vain to urge them as a matter of Faith. They cannot move our assent under that, or any other title whatsoever. For *Faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge*. Because though Faith be (supposed to be) founded on the testimony of God (who cannot lie) revealing any proposition to us, yet we cannot have an assurance of the truth of its being a Divine Revelation, greater than our own knowledge; since the whole strength of our certainty depends upon our knowledge that God revealed it; which in this case, where the proposition supposed

revealed, contradicts our knowledge or Reason, will always have this objection hanging to it, namely, that we cannot tell how to conceive that to come from God, the bountiful Author of our Being, which, if received for true, must overturn all the principles and foundations of knowledge He has given us, render all our faculties useless, wholly destroy the most excellent part of His Workmanship, our Understandings, and put man in a condition wherein he will have less light, less conduct, than the beast that perisheth. Reason is the proper judge, and Revelation though it may in consenting with it confirm its dictates, yet cannot in such cases invalidate its decrees; nor can we be obliged where we have the clear and evident sentence of Reason, to quit it for the contrary opinion under a pretence that it is matter of Faith, which can have no authority against the plain and clear dictates of Reason. . . .

“Reason is natural Revelation whereby the Eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which He has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation is natural Reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately, which Reason vouches the truth of, by the testimonies and proofs it gives that they came from God. So that he that takes away Reason to make way for Revelation,

puts out the light of both . . . as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope. . . .

“God when He makes the Prophet, does not unmake the man. He leaves all his faculties in their natural state to enable him to judge of his inspirations whether they be of Divine original or no. When He illuminates the mind with supernatural light, He does not extinguish that which is natural. Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything. . . .

“Men of old who had Revelation from God, had something else besides that inward light of assurance in their own minds to testify to them that it was from God”—that is to say, there was no mysticism about it, the favourite refuge of hallucinated persons and impostors. “They were not left to their own persuasions alone that those persuasions were from God, but had outward signs to convince them of the Author of those Revelations . . . and to assist the Divine Authority of a message they were sent with. Moses saw the bush burn without being consumed” (Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, bk. iv. chaps. 17–19. See also, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ss. 10, 13, 23).

These passages are deserving of large attention, especially from the clergy of all denominations. It is a gross breach of duty



for them to leave either their congregations or themselves in the dark upon a subject of such vast importance, or to treat Faith any longer as something of a cryptic nature. The man who shall best succeed in giving the world a right apprehension of this word—who shall best succeed in impressing upon his fellow-men that theological faith is neither more nor less than a rational and practical confidence in God, arising out of rational and practical considerations, will render them a better service than is calculable in golden pieces.

“First must the dead Letter of Religion own itself dead, and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living Spirit of Religion, freed from this its charnel-house, is to arise on us, new-born of Heaven and with new healing under its wings” (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 2, 3).

“It is a delusion to suppose that thought can be obtained by the aid of any other intellect than our own. . . . When a man is not speaking or writing from his own mind, he is as insipid company as a looking-glass” (Disraeli, *The Young Duke*, p. 267).

“We are the slaves of false knowledge. Our memories are filled with ideas that have no origin in truth. We learn nothing from ourselves. The sum of our experience is but a dim dream of the conduct of past generations,

generations that lived in a total ignorance of their nature. Our instructors are the unknowing and the dead. We study human nature in a charnel-house, and, like the nations of the East, we pay divine honours to the maniac and the fool. A series of systems have mystified existence. We believe what our fathers credited, because they were convinced without a cause. The faculty of thought has been destroyed. Yet our emasculated minds, without the power of fruition, still pant for the charms of wisdom. It is this that makes us fly with rapture to false knowledge — to tradition, to prejudice, to custom. Delusive tradition, destructive prejudice, degenerating custom! It is this that makes us prostrate ourselves with reverence before the wisdom of bygone Ages, in no one of which has man been the master of his own reason.

“I am desirous of writing a book that shall be all truth: a work of which the passion, the thought, the action and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incidents; from my own study of the genius of expression.

“When I turn over the pages of the metaphysicians” (he is thinking, of course, of the irrational ones) “I perceive a science that deals in words instead of facts. Arbitrary axioms lead to results that violate reason;

imaginary principles establish systems that contradict the Common Sense of mankind. All is dogma; no part, demonstration. Wearied, perplexed, doubtful, I throw down the volume in disgust.

“When I search into my own breast and trace the development of my own intellect and the formation of my own character, all is light and order. The luminous succeeds to the obscure; the certain to the doubtful; the practical to the impossible; and I experience all that refined and ennobling satisfaction that we derive from the discovery of truth and the contemplation of Nature” (Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming*, pt. i. c. i.).

“Let us meditate more deeply; let us at length discover that no society can long subsist that is based upon metaphysical absurdities. The law that regulates man must be founded on a knowledge of his nature, or that law leads him to ruin” (*ib.* pt. vi. c. i.).

“If I am to be remembered, let me be remembered as one who in a sad night of gloomy ignorance and savage bigotry was prescient of the flaming morning-break of bright philosophy, — as one who deeply sympathised with his fellow-men, and felt a proud and profound conviction of their perfectability; as one who devoted himself to the amelioration of his kind by the destruction of error and the propagation of truth” (*ib.* pt. vii. c. i.).

"Our theology has been cast in a scholastic mould. We are in need of, and are being gradually forced into, a theology based on psychology. The transition, I fear, will not be without pain, *but nothing can prevent it*" (Archbishop Temple).

"The soldier,—the working-man, does not in the least connect the things that he really believes in with Christianity" (*i.e.* official Christianity). "This was surely nothing short of tragedy. Here were men who believed absolutely in the Christian virtues of unselfishness, generosity, charity and humility without ever connecting them in their minds with Christ. The chaplains, as a rule, failed to realise this. They saw the inarticulateness and assumed a lack of any religion. . . . I am certain that if the chaplain wants to be understood and to win their sympathy, he must begin by showing them that Christianity is the explanation and the justification and the triumph of all that they do now really believe in" (*A Student in Arms*, pp. 112-14).

"The ordinary man wants something simple and applicable to the problems with which he has to deal. He wants a right point of view so that he can see the hard facts which crowd his life in their proper perspective. He wants power to be able to master the circumstances which threaten to swamp him. For the nebulous views of modern theology he has

little use. The present crisis is for the Church of England an unprecedented opportunity for either making a fresh start or committing suicide. When soldiers return," he thinks, "then, if ever, will they be willing to listen if the Churches have any vital message for them; any interpretation to offer of their experiences; any ideal of a practical and inspiring kind to point to. If the Churches miss that opportunity, woe betide them!" (*ib.* pp. 186, 199, 200).

The grand need of mankind is to be possessed and pervaded by Heroic Ideals, and Heroic Ideals are Intellectual.

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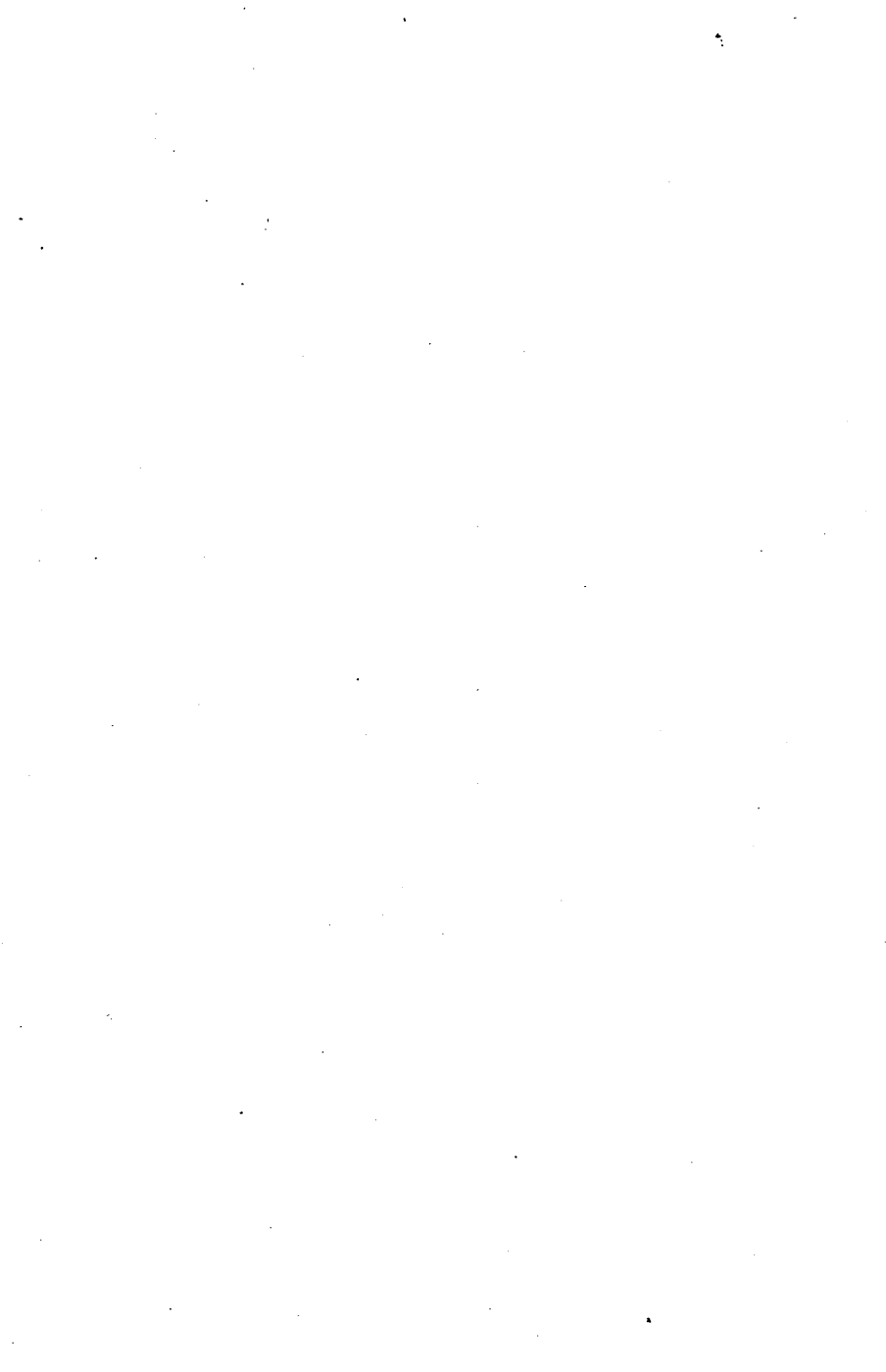
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